

The Country of the Pointed Firs



**PART
TWO**

Sarah Orne Jewett



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**THE COUNTRY
OF THE
POINTED FIRS**

CHAPTERS 13-21

**Sarah Orne
Jewett**

**first published in
1896**

VOLUME 2 of 2

XIII.

POOR JOANNA

One evening my ears caught a mysterious allusion which Mrs. Todd made to Shell-heap Island. It was a chilly night of cold northeasterly rain, and I made a fire for the first time in the Franklin stove in my room, and begged my two housemates

to come in and
keep me company.
The weather had
convinced Mrs. Todd
that it was time to
make a supply of
cough-drops, and she
had been bringing
forth herbs from
dark and dry hiding-
places, until now the
pungent dust and
odor of them had
resolved themselves
into one mighty
flavor of spearmint

that came from a
simmering caldron of
syrup in the kitchen.
She called it done,
and well done, and
had ostentatiously
left it to cool, and
taken her knitting-
work because Mrs.
Fosdick was busy
with hers. They sat
in the two rocking-
chairs, the small
woman and the large
one, but now and
then I could see that

Mrs. Todd's thoughts remained with the cough-drops. The time of gathering herbs was nearly over, but the time of syrups and cordials had begun.

The heat of the open fire made us a little drowsy, but something in the way Mrs. Todd spoke of Shell-heap Island waked my interest.

I waited to see if she would say any more, and then took a roundabout way back to the subject by saying what was first in my mind: that I wished the Green Island family were there to spend the evening with us,—Mrs. Todd's mother and her brother William.

Mrs. Todd smiled, and drummed on the arm of the rocking-chair. "Might scare William to death," she warned me; and Mrs. Fosdick mentioned her intention of going out to Green Island to stay two or three days, if the wind didn't make too much sea.

“Where is Shell-heap Island?” I ventured to ask, seizing the opportunity.

“Bears nor-east somewheres about three miles from Green Island; right off-shore, I should call it about eight miles out,” said Mrs.

Todd. "You never was there, dear; 'tis off the thoroughfares, and a very bad place to land at best."

"I should think 'twas," agreed Mrs. Fosdick, smoothing down her black silk apron. "'Tis a place worth visitin' when you once get there. Some o' the old folks was kind o' fearful about it. 'Twas

**'counted a great
place in old Indian
times; you can pick
up their stone tools
'most any time if you
hunt about. There's
a beautiful spring
o' water, too. Yes,
I remember when
they used to tell
queer stories about
Shell-heap Island.
Some said 'twas a
great bangeing-place
for the Indians, and
an old chief resided**

there once that ruled
the winds; and others
said they'd always
heard that once the
Indians come down
from up country an'
left a captive there
without any bo't,
an' 'twas too far to
swim across to Black
Island, so called, an'
he lived there till he
perished."

"I've heard say he
walked the island

after that, and sharp-sighted folks could see him an' lose him like one o' them citizens Cap'n Littlepage was acquainted with up to the north pole," announced Mrs. Todd grimly. "Anyway, there was Indians—you can see their shell-heap that named the island; and I've heard myself that 'twas

one o' their cannibal places, but I never could believe it.

There never was no cannibals on the coast o' Maine. All the Indians o' these regions are tame-looking folks."

"Sakes alive, yes!" exclaimed Mrs. Fosdick. "Ought to see them painted savages I've seen when I was young

out in the South Sea Islands! That was the time for folks to travel, 'way back in the old whalin' days!"

"Whalin' must have been dull for a lady, hardly ever makin' a lively port, and not takin' in any mixed cargoes," said Mrs. Todd. "I never desired to go a whalin' v'y'ge myself."

"I used to return
feelin' very slack
an' behind the times,
'tis true," explained
Mrs. Fosdick, "but
'twas excitin', an'
we always done
extra well, and felt
rich when we did
get ashore. I liked
the variety. There,
how times have
changed; how few
seafarin' families
there are left! What
a lot o' queer folks

there used to be about here, anyway, when we was young, Almiry. Everybody's just like everybody else, now; nobody to laugh about, and nobody to cry about."

It seemed to me that there were peculiarities of character in the region of Dunnet Landing yet, but I did not like to interrupt.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Todd after a moment of meditation, “there was certain a good many curiosities of human natur’ in this neighborhood years ago. There was more energy then, and in some the energy took a singular turn. In these days the young folks is all copy-cats, ‘fraid to death they won’t

be all just alike; as for the old folks, they pray for the advantage o' bein' a little different."

"I ain't heard of a copy-cat this great many years," said Mrs. Fosdick, laughing; "'twas a favorite term o' my grandfather's. No, I wa'n't thinking o' those things, but of them strange straying

creatur's that used
to rove the country.
You don't see them
now, or the ones that
used to hive away
in their own houses
with some strange
notion or other."

I thought again of
Captain Littlepage,
but my companions
were not reminded of

his name; and there was brother William at Green Island, whom we all three knew.

“I was talking o’ poor Joanna the other day. I hadn’t thought of her for a great while,” said Mrs. Fosdick abruptly. “Mis’ Brayton an’ I recalled her as we sat together sewing. She was one o’ your

peculiar persons,
wa'n't she? Speaking
of such persons,"
she turned to explain
to me, "there was
a sort of a nun
or hermit person
lived out there for
years all alone on
Shell-heap Island.
Miss Joanna Todd,
her name was,—a
cousin o' Almiry's
late husband."

I expressed my interest, but as I glanced at Mrs. Todd I saw that she was confused by sudden affectionate feeling and unmistakable desire for reticence.

"I never want to hear Joanna laughed about," she said anxiously.

"Nor I," answered Mrs. Fosdick reassuringly. "She

was crossed in love,—that was all the matter to begin with; but as I look back, I can see that Joanna was one doomed from the first to fall into a melancholy. She retired from the world for good an' all, though she was a well-off woman. All she wanted was to get away from folks; she thought she

wasn't fit to live with anybody, and wanted to be free. Shell-heap Island come to her from her father, and first thing folks knew she'd gone off out there to live, and left word she didn't want no company. 'Twas a bad place to get to, unless the wind an' tide were just right; 'twas hard work to make a landing."

“What time of year was this?” I asked.

“Very late in the summer,” said Mrs. Fosdick. “No, I never could laugh at Joanna, as some did. She set everything by the young man, an’ they were going to marry in about a month, when he got bewitched with a girl ‘way up the bay, and married

her, and went off to Massachusetts. He wasn't well thought of,—there were those who thought Joanna's money was what had tempted him; but she'd given him her whole heart, an' she wa'n't so young as she had been. All her hopes were built on marryin', an' havin' a real home and somebody to look to; she acted just

like a bird when its nest is spoilt. The day after she heard the news she was in dreadful woe, but the next she came to herself very quiet, and took the horse and wagon, and drove fourteen miles to the lawyer's, and signed a paper givin' her half of the farm to her brother. They never had got along very well together,

but he didn't want to sign it, till she acted so distressed that he gave in.

Edward Todd's wife was a good woman, who felt very bad indeed, and used every argument with Joanna; but Joanna took a poor old boat that had been her father's and lo'ded in a few things, and off she put all alone, with a good land

breeze, right out to sea. Edward Todd ran down to the beach, an' stood there cryin' like a boy to see her go, but she was out o' hearin'. She never stepped foot on the mainland again long as she lived."

"How large an island is it? How did she manage in winter?" I asked.

“Perhaps thirty acres, rocks and all,” answered Mrs. Todd, taking up the story gravely. “There can’t be much of it that the salt spray don’t fly over in storms. No, ‘tis a dreadful small place to make a world of; it has a different look from any of the other islands, but there’s a sheltered cove on the south side, with

mud-flats across
one end of it at low
water where there's
excellent clams, and
the big shell-heap
keeps some o' the
wind off a little
house her father
took the trouble to
build when he was
a young man. They
said there was an old
house built o' logs
there before that,
with a kind of natural
cellar in the rock

under it. He used to stay out there days to a time, and anchor a little sloop he had, and dig clams to fill it, and sail up to Portland. They said the dealers always gave him an extra price, the clams were so noted. Joanna used to go out and stay with him. They were always great companions, so she knew just what 'twas

out there. There was a few sheep that belonged to her brother an' her, but she bargained for him to come and get them on the edge o' cold weather. Yes, she desired him to come for the sheep; an' his wife thought perhaps Joanna'd return, but he said no, an' lo'ded the bo't with warm things an' what he thought

she'd need through the winter. He come home with the sheep an' left the other things by the house, but she never so much as looked out o' the window. She done it for a penance. She must have wanted to see Edward by that time."

Mrs. Fosdick was fidgeting with eagerness to speak.

“Some thought the first cold snap would set her ashore, but she always remained,” concluded Mrs. Todd soberly.

“Talk about the men not having any curiosity!” exclaimed Mrs. Fosdick scornfully. “Why, the waters round Shell-heap Island were white with sails all that

fall. 'Twas never
called no great of a
fishin'-ground before.
Many of 'em made
excuse to go ashore
to get water at the
spring; but at last she
spoke to a bo't-load,
very dignified and
calm, and said that
she'd like it better
if they'd make a
practice of getting
water to Black Island
or somewheres else
and leave her alone,

except in case of
accident or trouble.
But there was one
man who had always
set everything by
her from a boy. He'd
have married her
if the other hadn't
come about an' spoilt
his chance, and he
used to get close to
the island, before
light, on his way out
fishin', and throw
a little bundle way
up the green slope

front o' the house.
His sister told me
she happened to see,
the first time, what
a pretty choice he
made o' useful things
that a woman would
feel lost without.
He stood off fishin',
and could see them
in the grass all day,
though sometimes
she'd come out and
walk right by them.
There was other
bo'ts near, out after

mackerel. But early next morning his present was gone. He didn't presume too much, but once he took her a nice firkin o' things he got up to Portland, and when spring come he landed her a hen and chickens in a nice little coop. There was a good many old friends had Joanna on their minds."

“Yes,” said Mrs. Todd, losing her sad reserve in the growing sympathy of these reminiscences. “How everybody used to notice whether there was smoke out of the chimney! The Black Island folks could see her with their spy-glass, and if they’d ever missed getting some sign o’ life they’d have sent notice to her

folks. But after the first year or two Joanna was more and more forgotten as an every-day charge. Folks lived very simple in those days, you know," she continued, as Mrs. Fosdick's knitting was taking much thought at the moment. "I expect there was always plenty of driftwood thrown up, and a

poor failin' patch of
spruces covered all
the north side of the
island, so she always
had something to
burn. She was very
fond of workin' in the
garden ashore, and
that first summer
she began to till the
little field out there,
and raised a nice
parcel o' potatoes.
She could fish, o'
course, and there
was all her clams

an' lobsters. You
can always live well
in any wild place by
the sea when you'd
starve to death up
country, except 'twas
berry time. Joanna
had berries out
there, blackberries
at least, and there
was a few herbs in
case she needed
them. Mullein in
great quantities and
a plant o' wormwood
I remember seeing

once when I stayed
there, long before
she fled out to
Shell-heap. Yes, I
recall the wormwood,
which is always a
planted herb, so
there must have been
folks there before
the Todds' day. A
growin' bush makes
the best gravestone;
I expect that
wormwood always

stood for somebody's solemn monument. Catnip, too, is a very endurin' herb about an old place."

"But what I want to know is what she did for other things," interrupted Mrs. Fosdick. "Almiry, what did she do for clothin' when she needed to

replenish, or risin'
for her bread, or the
piece-bag that no
woman can live long
without?"

"Or company,"
suggested Mrs.
Todd. "Joanna was
one that loved her
friends. There must
have been a terrible
sight o' long winter
evenin's that first
year."

**“There was her
hens,” suggested
Mrs. Fosdick, after
reviewing the
melancholy situation.
“She never wanted
the sheep after that
first season. There
wa’n’t no proper
pasture for sheep
after the June grass
was past, and she
ascertained the fact
and couldn’t bear to
see them suffer; but
the chickens done**

well. I remember sailin' by one spring afternoon, an' seein' the coops out front o' the house in the sun. How long was it before you went out with the minister? You were the first ones that ever really got ashore to see Joanna."

I had been reflecting upon a state of society which

admitted such personal freedom and a voluntary hermitage. There was something mediaeval in the behavior of poor Joanna Todd under a disappointment of the heart. The two women had drawn closer together, and were talking on, quite unconscious of a listener.

“Poor Joanna!” said Mrs. Todd again, and sadly shook her head as if there were things one could not speak about.

“I called her a great fool,” declared Mrs. Fosdick, with spirit, “but I pitied her then, and I pity her far more now. Some other minister would have been a great help to her,—one

that preached self-forgetfulness and doin' for others to cure our own ills; but Parson Dimmick was a vague person, well meanin', but very numb in his feelin's. I don't suppose at that troubled time Joanna could think of any way to mend her troubles except to run off and hide."

“Mother used to say she didn’t see how Joanna lived without having nobody to do for, getting her own meals and tending her own poor self day in an’ day out,” said Mrs. Todd sorrowfully.

“There was the hens,” repeated Mrs. Fosdick kindly. “I expect she soon came to makin’ folks

o' them. No, I never went to work to blame Joanna, as some did. She was full o' feeling, and her troubles hurt her more than she could bear. I see it all now as I couldn't when I was young."

"I suppose in old times they had their shut-up convents for just such folks," said Mrs. Todd,

as if she and her friend had disagreed about Joanna once, and were now in happy harmony. She seemed to speak with new openness and freedom. "Oh yes, I was only too pleased when the Reverend Mr. Dimmick invited me to go out with him. He hadn't been very long in the place when Joanna left home and friends.

'Twas one day that next summer after she went, and I had been married early in the spring. He felt that he ought to go out and visit her. She was a member of the church, and might wish to have him consider her spiritual state. I wa'n't so sure o' that, but I always liked Joanna, and I'd come to be her cousin by marriage.

Nathan an' I had
conversed about goin'
out to pay her a visit,
but he got his chance
to sail sooner'n he
expected. He always
thought everything of
her, and last time he
come home, knowing
nothing of her
change, he brought
her a beautiful coral
pin from a port
he'd touched at
somewheres up the
Mediterranean. So I

wrapped the little box in a nice piece of paper and put it in my pocket, and picked her a bunch of fresh lemon balm, and off we started."

Mrs. Fosdick laughed. "I remember hearin' about your trials on the v'y'ge," she said.

"Why, yes," continued Mrs. Todd in her company manner. "I picked

her the balm, an' we started. Why, yes, Susan, the minister liked to have cost me my life that day. He would fasten the sheet, though I advised against it. He said the rope was rough an' cut his hand. There was a fresh breeze, an' he went on talking rather high flown, an' I felt some interested. All of a

sudden there come
up a gust, and he
gave a screech and
stood right up and
called for help, 'way
out there to sea. I
knocked him right
over into the bottom
o' the bo't, getting
by to catch hold of
the sheet an' untie
it. He wasn't but a
little man; I helped
him right up after the

squall passed, and made a handsome apology to him, but he did act kind o' offended."

"I do think they ought not to settle them landlocked folks in parishes where they're liable to be on the water," insisted Mrs. Fosdick. "Think of the families in our parish that was scattered all

about the bay, and what a sight o' sails you used to see, in Mr. Dimmick's day, standing across to the mainland on a pleasant Sunday morning, filled with church-going folks, all sure to want him some time or other! You couldn't find no doctor that would stand up in the boat and screech if a flaw struck her."

“Old Dr. Bennett had a beautiful sailboat, didn’t he?” responded Mrs. Todd. “And how well he used to brave the weather! Mother always said that in time o’ trouble that tall white sail used to look like an angel’s wing comin’ over the sea to them that was in pain. Well, there’s a difference in gifts. Mr. Dimmick was not without light.”

“‘Twas light o’ the moon, then,” snapped Mrs. Fosdick; “he was pompous enough, but I never could remember a single word he said. There, go on, Mis’ Todd; I forget a great deal about that day you went to see poor Joanna.”

“I felt she saw us coming, and knew us a great way off;

yes, I seemed to feel it within me," said our friend, laying down her knitting. "I kept my seat, and took the bo't inshore without saying a word; there was a short channel that I was sure Mr. Dimmick wasn't acquainted with, and the tide was very low. She never came out to warn us off nor anything, and I

thought, as I hauled
the bo't up on a wave
and let the Reverend
Mr. Dimmick step
out, that it was
somethin' gained
to be safe ashore.
There was a little
smoke out o' the
chimney o' Joanna's
house, and it did look
sort of homelike and
pleasant with wild
mornin'-glory vines
trained up; an' there
was a plot o' flowers

under the front window, portulacas and things. I believe she'd made a garden once, when she was stopping there with her father, and some things must have seeded in. It looked as if she might have gone over to the other side of the island. 'Twas neat and pretty all about the house, and a lovely day in July.

We walked up from the beach together very sedate, and I felt for poor Nathan's little pin to see if 'twas safe in my dress pocket. All of a sudden Joanna come right to the fore door and stood there, not sayin' a word."

XIV.

THE HERMITAGE

My companion and I had been so intent upon the subject of the conversation that we had not heard any one open the gate, but at this moment, above the noise of the rain, we heard a loud knocking. We were all startled as we sat by the fire, and Mrs.

Todd rose hastily and went to answer the call, leaving her rocking-chair in violent motion. Mrs. Fosdick and I heard an anxious voice at the door speaking of a sick child, and Mrs. Todd's kind, motherly voice inviting the messenger in: then we waited in silence. There was a sound of heavy dropping of rain from the eaves,

and the distant roar
and undertone of
the sea. My thoughts
flew back to the
lonely woman on her
outer island; what
separation from
humankind she must
have felt, what terror
and sadness, even in
a summer storm like
this!

“You send right
after the doctor if
she ain’t better in

half an hour," said Mrs. Todd to her worried customer as they parted; and I felt a warm sense of comfort in the evident resources of even so small a neighborhood, but for the poor hermit Joanna there was no neighbor on a winter night.

"How did she look?" demanded Mrs.

Fosdick, without preface, as our large hostess returned to the little room with a mist about her from standing long in the wet doorway, and the sudden draught of her coming beat out the smoke and flame from the Franklin stove. "How did poor Joanna look?"

"She was the same as ever, except I

thought she looked smaller," answered Mrs. Todd after thinking a moment; perhaps it was only a last considering thought about her patient. "Yes, she was just the same, and looked very nice, Joanna did. I had been married since she left home, an' she treated me like her own folks. I expected she'd look

strange, with her hair turned gray in a night or somethin', but she wore a pretty gingham dress I'd often seen her wear before she went away; she must have kept it nice for best in the afternoons. She always had beautiful, quiet manners. I remember she waited till we were close to her, and then kissed me

real affectionate,
and inquired for
Nathan before she
shook hands with
the minister, and
then she invited us
both in. 'Twas the
same little house
her father had built
him when he was a
bachelor, with one
livin'-room, and
a little mite of a
bedroom out of it
where she slept,
but 'twas neat as a

ship's cabin. There was some old chairs, an' a seat made of a long box that might have held boat tackle an' things to lock up in his fishin' days, and a good enough stove so anybody could cook and keep warm in cold weather. I went over once from home and stayed 'most a week with Joanna when we was girls, and

those young happy
days rose up before
me. Her father was
busy all day fishin' or
clammin'; he was one
o' the pleasantest
men in the world,
but Joanna's mother
had the grim streak,
and never knew what
'twas to be happy.
The first minute
my eyes fell upon
Joanna's face that

day I saw how she had grown to look like Mis' Todd. 'Twas the mother right over again."

"Oh dear me!" said Mrs. Fosdick.

"Joanna had done one thing very pretty. There was a little piece o' swamp on the island where good rushes grew plenty, and she'd gathered 'em, and braided

some beautiful mats for the floor and a thick cushion for the long bunk. She'd showed a good deal of invention; you see there was a nice chance to pick up pieces o' wood and boards that drove ashore, and she'd made good use o' what she found. There wasn't no clock, but she had a few dishes on a

shelf, and flowers set about in shells fixed to the walls, so it did look sort of homelike, though so lonely and poor. I couldn't keep the tears out o' my eyes, I felt so sad. I said to myself, I must get mother to come over an' see Joanna; the love in mother's heart would warm her, an' she might be able to advise."

“Oh no, Joanna was dreadful stern,” said Mrs. Fosdick.

“We were all settin’ down very proper, but Joanna would keep stealin’ glances at me as if she was glad I come. She had but little to say; she was real polite an’ gentle, and yet forbiddin’. The minister found it hard,” confessed

Mrs. Todd; "he got embarrassed, an' when he put on his authority and asked her if she felt to enjoy religion in her present situation, an' she replied that she must be excused from answerin', I thought I should fly. She might have made it easier for him; after all, he was the minister and had taken some

trouble to come out,
though 'twas kind
of cold an' unfeelin'
the way he inquired.
I thought he might
have seen the little
old Bible a-layin' on
the shelf close by
him, an' I wished he
knew enough to just
lay his hand on it an'
read somethin' kind
an' fatherly 'stead
of accusin' her, an'
then given poor
Joanna his blessin'

with the hope she
might be led to
comfort. He did offer
prayer, but 'twas all
about hearin' the
voice o' God out o'
the whirlwind; and
I thought while he
was goin' on that
anybody that had
spent the long cold
winter all alone out
on Shell-heap Island
knew a good deal

more about those things than he did. I got so provoked I opened my eyes and stared right at him.

“She didn’t take no notice, she kep’ a nice respectful manner towards him, and when there come a pause she asked if he had any interest about the old Indian remains, and took down some

queer stone gouges
and hammers off of
one of her shelves
and showed them to
him same's if he was
a boy. He remarked
that he'd like to
walk over an' see
the shell-heap; so
she went right to
the door and pointed
him the way. I see
then that she'd made
her some kind o'

sandal-shoes out o' the fine rushes to wear on her feet; she stepped light an' nice in 'em as shoes."

Mrs. Fosdick leaned back in her rocking-chair and gave a heavy sigh.

"I didn't move at first, but I'd held out just as long as I could," said Mrs. Todd, whose voice trembled a

little. "When Joanna returned from the door, an' I could see that man's stupid back departin' among the wild rose bushes, I just ran to her an' caught her in my arms. I wasn't so big as I be now, and she was older than me, but I hugged her tight, just as if she was a child. 'Oh, Joanna dear,' I says, 'won't you come

ashore an' live 'long
o' me at the Landin',
or go over to Green
Island to mother's
when winter comes?
Nobody shall trouble
you an' mother finds
it hard bein' alone. I
can't bear to leave
you here'—and
I burst right out
crying. I'd had my

own trials, young as I was, an' she knew it. Oh, I did entreat her; yes, I entreated Joanna."

"What did she say then?" asked Mrs. Fosdick, much moved.

"She looked the same way, sad an' remote through it all," said Mrs. Todd mournfully. "She took hold of my hand, and we sat down close

together; 'twas as if she turned round an' made a child of me. 'I haven't got no right to live with folks no more,' she said. 'You must never ask me again, Almiry: I've done the only thing I could do, and I've made my choice. I feel a great comfort in your kindness, but I don't deserve it. I have committed the unpardonable sin; you

don't understand,'
says she humbly. 'I
was in great wrath
and trouble, and my
thoughts was so
wicked towards God
that I can't expect
ever to be forgiven.
I have come to know
what it is to have
patience, but I have
lost my hope. You
must tell those that
ask how 'tis with
me,' she said, 'an'
tell them I want to

be alone.' I couldn't speak; no, there wa'n't anything I could say, she seemed so above everything common. I was a good deal younger then than I be now, and I got Nathan's little coral pin out o' my pocket and put it into her hand; and when she saw it and I told her where it come from, her face did really

light up for a minute,
sort of bright an'
pleasant. 'Nathan an'
I was always good
friends; I'm glad he
don't think hard
of me,' says she. 'I
want you to have it,
Almiry, an' wear it
for love o' both o'
us,' and she handed
it back to me. 'You
give my love to
Nathan,—he's a dear
good man,' she said;
'an' tell your mother,

if I should be sick she mustn't wish I could get well, but I want her to be the one to come.' Then she seemed to have said all she wanted to, as if she was done with the world, and we sat there a few minutes longer together. It was real sweet and quiet except for a good many birds and the sea rollin' up on the beach; but at last

she rose, an' I did too, and she kissed me and held my hand in hers a minute, as if to say good-by; then she turned and went right away out o' the door and disappeared.

"The minister come back pretty soon, and I told him I was all ready, and we started down to the bo't. He had picked up some round stones

and things and was carrying them in his pocket-handkerchief; an' he sat down amidships without making any question, and let me take the rudder an' work the bo't, an' made no remarks for some time, until we sort of eased it off speaking of the weather, an' subjects that arose as we skirted Black Island, where two

or three families
lived belongin' to the
parish. He preached
next Sabbath as
usual, somethin'
high soundin' about
the creation, and I
couldn't help thinkin'
he might never
get no further; he
seemed to know no
remedies, but he
had a great use of
words."

Mrs. Fosdick sighed again. "Hearin' you tell about Joanna brings the time right back as if 'twas yesterday," she said. "Yes, she was one o' them poor things that talked about the great sin; we don't seem to hear nothing about the unpardonable sin now, but you may say 'twas not uncommon then."

"I expect that if it had been in these days, such a person would be plagued to death with idle folks," continued Mrs. Todd, after a long pause. "As it was, nobody trespassed on her; all the folks about the bay respected her an' her feelings; but as time wore on, after you left here, one after another ventured to

make occasion to put
somethin' ashore for
her if they went that
way. I know mother
used to go to see her
sometimes, and send
William over now and
then with something
fresh an' nice from
the farm. There
is a point on the
sheltered side where
you can lay a boat
close to shore an'
land anything safe on
the turf out o' reach

o' the water. There were one or two others, old folks, that she would see, and now an' then she'd hail a passin' boat an' ask for somethin'; and mother got her to promise that she would make some sign to the Black Island folks if she wanted help. I never saw her myself to speak to after that day."

"I expect nowadays, if such a thing happened, she'd have gone out West to her uncle's folks or up to Massachusetts and had a change, an' come home good as new. The world's bigger an' freer than it used to be," urged Mrs. Fosdick.

"No," said her friend. "'Tis like bad eyesight, the mind

of such a person: if
your eyes don't see
right there may be a
remedy, but there's
no kind of glasses to
remedy the mind. No,
Joanna was Joanna,
and there she lays
on her island where
she lived and did her
poor penance. She
told mother the day
she was dyin' that
she always used to
want to be fetched
inshore when it

come to the last;
but she'd thought it
over, and desired to
be laid on the island,
if 'twas thought
right. So the funeral
was out there, a
Saturday afternoon
in September. 'Twas
a pretty day, and
there wa'n't hardly
a boat on the coast
within twenty miles
that didn't head for
Shell-heap cram-full
o' folks an' all real

respectful, same's if
she'd always stayed
ashore and held her
friends. Some went
out o' mere curiosity,
I don't doubt,—
there's always such
to every funeral;
but most had real
feelin', and went
purpose to show it.
She'd got most o'
the wild sparrows as
tame as could be,
livin' out there so
long among 'em, and

one flew right in and lit on the coffin an' begun to sing while Mr. Dimmick was speakin'. He was put out by it, an' acted as if he didn't know whether to stop or go on. I may have been prejudiced, but I wa'n't the only one thought the poor little bird done the best of the two."

**“What became o’
the man that treated
her so, did you
ever hear?” asked
Mrs. Fosdick. “I
know he lived up to
Massachusetts for a
while. Somebody who
came from the same
place told me that
he was in trade there
an’ doin’ very well,
but that was years
ago.”**

**"I never heard
anything more than
that; he went to the
war in one o' the
early regiments.
No, I never heard
any more of him,"
answered Mrs. Todd.
"Joanna was another
sort of person, and
perhaps he showed
good judgment in
marryin' somebody
else, if only he'd
behaved straight-
forward and manly.**

He was a shifty-eyed, coaxin' sort of man, that got what he wanted out o' folks, an' only gave when he wanted to buy, made friends easy and lost 'em without knowin' the difference. She'd had a piece o' work tryin' to make him walk accordin' to her right ideas, but she'd have had too much variety ever to fall into a

melancholy. Some
is meant to be the
Joannas in this world,
an' 'twas her poor
lot."

XV. ON SHELL-HEAP ISLAND

**Some time after
Mrs. Fosdick's visit
was over and we
had returned to our
former quietness,
I was out sailing
alone with Captain
Bowden in his large
boat. We were
taking the crooked
northeasterly
channel seaward,**

and were well out from shore while it was still early in the afternoon. I found myself presently among some unfamiliar islands, and suddenly remembered the story of poor Joanna. There is something in the fact of a hermitage that cannot fail to touch the imagination; the recluses are a sad

kindred, but they are never commonplace. Mrs. Todd had truly said that Joanna was like one of the saints in the desert; the loneliness of sorrow will forever keep alive their sad succession.

“Where is Shell-heap Island?” I asked eagerly.

“You see Shell-heap now, layin’ ‘way out

beyond Black Island there," answered the captain, pointing with outstretched arm as he stood, and holding the rudder with his knee.

"I should like very much to go there," said I, and the captain, without

comment, changed his course a little more to the eastward and let the reef out of his mainsail.

"I don't know's we can make an easy landin' for ye," he remarked doubtfully.

"May get your feet wet; bad place to land. Trouble is I ought to have brought a tag-boat; but they clutch on to

the water so, an' I
do love to sail free.
This gre't boat gets
easy bothered with
anything trailin'.
'Tain't breakin' much
on the meetin'-
house ledges; guess
I can fetch in to
Shell-heap."

"How long is it
since Miss Joanna
Todd died?" I asked,
partly by way of
explanation.

**“Twenty-two years
come September,”
answered the captain,
after reflection. “She
died the same year
as my oldest boy was
born, an’ the town
house was burnt
over to the Port. I
didn’t know but you
merely wanted to
hunt for some o’
them Indian relics.
Long’s you want to
see where Joanna
lived—No, ‘tain’t**

breakin' over the
ledges; we'll manage
to fetch across the
shoals somehow, 'tis
such a distance to
go 'way round, and
tide's a-risin'," he
ended hopefully, and
we sailed steadily
on, the captain
speechless with
intent watching of
a difficult course,
until the small island

with its low whitish promontory lay in full view before us under the bright afternoon sun.

The month was August, and I had seen the color of the islands change from the fresh green of June to a sunburnt brown that made them look like stone, except where the dark green of

the spruces and
fir balsam kept
the tint that even
winter storms might
deepen, but not fade.
The few wind-bent
trees on Shell-heap
Island were mostly
dead and gray, but
there were some
low-growing bushes,
and a stripe of light
green ran along just
above the shore,
which I knew to be
wild morning-glories.

**As we came close I
could see the high
stone walls of a small
square field, though
there were no sheep
left to assail it; and
below, there was
a little harbor-like
cove where Captain
Bowden was boldly
running the great
boat in to seek a**

landing-place. There was a crooked channel of deep water which led close up against the shore.

“There, you hold fast for’ard there, an’ wait for her to lift on the wave. You’ll make a good landin’ if you’re smart; right on the port-hand side!” the captain called excitedly; and

**I, standing ready
with high ambition,
seized my chance and
leaped over to the
grassy bank.**

**"I'm beat if I ain't
aground after all!"
mourned the captain
despondently.**

**But I could reach
the bowsprit, and
he pushed with the
boat-hook, while the
wind veered round a
little as if on purpose**

and helped with the sail; so presently the boat was free and began to drift out from shore.

“Used to call this p’int Joanna’s wharf privilege, but ‘t has worn away in the weather since her time. I thought one or two bumps wouldn’t hurt us none,—paint’s got to be renewed,

anyway,—but I never thought she'd tetch. I figured on shyin' by," the captain apologized. "She's too gre't a boat to handle well in here; but I used to sort of shy by in Joanna's day, an' cast a little somethin' ashore—some apples or a couple o' pears if I had 'em—on the grass, where she'd be sure to see."

I stood watching
while Captain Bowden
cleverly found his
way back to deeper
water. "You needn't
make no haste," he
called to me; "I'll
keep within call.
Joanna lays right
up there in the far
corner o' the field.
There used to be a
path led to the place.
I always knew her
well. I was out here
to the funeral."

I found the path;
it was touching to
discover that this
lonely spot was not
without its pilgrims.
Later generations will
know less and less
of Joanna herself,
but there are paths
trodden to the
shrines of solitude
the world over,—
the world cannot
forget them, try
as it may; the feet
of the young find

them out because
of curiosity and dim
foreboding; while
the old bring hearts
full of remembrance.
This plain anchorite
had been one of
those whom sorrow
made too lonely to
brave the sight of
men, too timid to
front the simple
world she knew, yet
valiant enough to

live alone with her
poor insistent human
nature and the calms
and passions of the
sea and sky.

The birds were flying
all about the field;
they fluttered up
out of the grass at
my feet as I walked
along, so tame that
I liked to think they
kept some happy
tradition from
summer to summer of

the safety of nests
and good fellowship
of mankind. Poor
Joanna's house
was gone except
the stones of its
foundations, and
there was little
trace of her flower
garden except a
single faded sprig
of much-enduring
French pinks, which
a great bee and a
yellow butterfly were
befriending together.

I drank at the spring,
and thought that
now and then some
one would follow
me from the busy,
hard-worked, and
simple-thoughted
countryside of the
mainland, which lay
dim and dreamlike
in the August haze,
as Joanna must have
watched it many a
day. There was the
world, and here was
she with eternity well

begun. In the life of each of us, I said to myself, there is a place remote and islanded, and given to endless regret or secret happiness; we are each the uncompanioned hermit and recluse of an hour or a day; we understand our fellows of the cell to whatever age of history they may belong.

But as I stood alone on the island, in the sea-breeze, suddenly there came a sound of distant voices; gay voices and laughter from a pleasure-boat that was going seaward full of boys and girls. I knew, as if she had told me, that poor Joanna must have heard the like on many and many a summer afternoon, and must

have welcomed the
good cheer in spite
of hopelessness and
winter weather, and
all the sorrow and
disappointment in the
world.

XVI.

THE GREAT EXPEDITION

Mrs. Todd never by any chance gave warning over night of her great projects and adventures by sea and land. She first came to an understanding with the primal forces of nature, and never trusted to any preliminary promise

of good weather,
but examined the
day for herself in its
infancy. Then, if the
stars were propitious,
and the wind blew
from a quarter of
good inheritance
whence no surprises
of sea-turns or
southwest sultriness
might be feared, long
before I was fairly
awake I used to hear
a rustle and knocking
like a great mouse

in the walls, and an impatient tread on the steep garret stairs that led to Mrs. Todd's chief place of storage. She went and came as if she had already started on her expedition with utmost haste and kept returning for something that was forgotten. When I appeared in quest of my breakfast, she would be

absent-minded and sparing of speech, as if I had displeased her, and she was now, by main force of principle, holding herself back from altercation and strife of tongues.

These signs of a change became familiar to me in the course of time, and Mrs. Todd hardly noticed some plain

proofs of divination
one August morning
when I said, without
preface, that I
had just seen the
Beggs' best chaise
go by, and that we
should have to take
the grocery. Mrs.
Todd was alert in a
moment.

"There! I might
have known!" she
exclaimed. "It's the
15th of August, when

he goes and gets his money. He heired an annuity from an uncle o' his on his mother's side. I understood the uncle said none o' Sam Begg's wife's folks should make free with it, so after Sam's gone it'll all be past an' spent, like last summer. That's what Sam prospers on now, if you can call it prosperin'. Yes, I might have known.

‘Tis the 15th o’
August with him, an’
he gener’ly stops to
dinner with a cousin’s
widow on the way
home. Feb’uary n’
August is the times.
Takes him ‘bout all
day to go an’ come.”

I heard this
explanation with
interest. The tone of
Mrs. Todd’s voice was
complaining at the
last.

“I like the grocery just as well as the chaise,” I hastened to say, referring to a long-bodied high wagon with a canopy-top, like an attenuated four-posted bedstead on wheels, in which we sometimes journeyed. “We can put things in behind—roots and flowers

and raspberries, or anything you are going after—much better than if we had the chaise.”

Mrs. Todd looked stony and unwilling. “I counted upon the chaise,” she said, turning her back to me, and roughly pushing back all the quiet tumblers on the cupboard shelf as if they had been

impertinent. "Yes, I desired the chaise for once. I ain't goin' berryin' nor to fetch home no more wilted vegetation this year. Season's about past, except for a poor few o' late things," she added in a milder tone. "I'm goin' up country. No,

I ain't intendin' to go berryin'. I've been plottin' for it the past fortnight and hopin' for a good day."

"Would you like to have me go too?" I asked frankly, but not without a humble fear that I might have mistaken the purpose of this latest plan.

"Oh certain, dear!" answered my friend affectionately. "Oh

no, I never thought
o' any one else
for comp'ny, if it's
convenient for you,
long's poor mother
ain't come. I ain't
nothin' like so handy
with a conveyance
as I be with a good
bo't. Comes o' my
early bringing-up. I
expect we've got to
make that great high
wagon do. The tires
want settin' and 'tis
all loose-jointed, so

I can hear it shackle
the other side o' the
ridge. We'll put the
basket in front. I
ain't goin' to have it
bouncin' an' twirlin'
all the way. Why,
I've been makin'
some nice hearts and
rounds to carry."

These were signs of
high festivity, and my
interest deepened
moment by moment.

"I'll go down to the Beggs' and get the horse just as soon as I finish my breakfast," said I.

"Then we can start whenever you are ready."

Mrs. Todd looked cloudy again. "I don't know but you look nice enough to go just as you be," she suggested doubtfully. "No, you wouldn't

want to wear that pretty blue dress o' yourn 'way up country. 'Taint dusty now, but it may be comin' home. No, I expect you'd rather not wear that and the other hat."

"Oh yes. I shouldn't think of wearing these clothes," said I, with sudden illumination. "Why, if we're going up

country and are likely to see some of your friends, I'll put on my blue dress, and you must wear your watch; I am not going at all if you mean to wear the big hat."

"Now you're behavin' pretty," responded Mrs. Todd, with a gay toss of her head and a cheerful smile, as she came across

the room, bringing a saucerful of wild raspberries, a pretty piece of salvage from supper-time. "I was cast down when I see you come to breakfast. I didn't think 'twas just what you'd select to wear to the reunion, where you're goin' to meet everybody."

"What reunion do you mean?" I asked, not

without amazement.
“Not the Bowden
Family’s? I thought
that was going
to take place in
September.”

“To-day’s the day.
They sent word the
middle o’ the week.
I thought you might
have heard of it. Yes,
they changed the
day. I been thinkin’
we’d talk it over, but
you never can tell

beforehand how it's goin' to be, and 'taint worth while to wear a day all out before it comes." Mrs. Todd gave no place to the pleasures of anticipation, but she spoke like the oracle that she was. "I wish mother was here to go," she continued sadly. "I did look for her last night, and I couldn't keep back the tears when the

dark really fell and
she wa'n't here, she
does so enjoy a great
occasion. If William
had a mite o' snap
an' ambition, he'd
take the lead at such
a time. Mother likes
variety, and there
ain't but a few nice
opportunities 'round
here, an' them she
has to miss 'less
she contrives to
get ashore to me.
I do re'lly hate to

go to the reunion
without mother, an'
'tis a beautiful day;
everybody'll be
asking where she is.
Once she'd have got
here anyway. Poor
mother's beginnin' to
feel her age."

"Why, there's your
mother now!" I
exclaimed with joy,
I was so glad to see
the dear old soul

again. "I hear her voice at the gate." But Mrs. Todd was out of the door before me.

There, sure enough, stood Mrs. Blackett, who must have left Green Island before daylight. She had climbed the steep road from the waterside so eagerly that she was out of breath,

and was standing
by the garden fence
to rest. She held an
old-fashioned brown
wicker cap-basket
in her hand, as
if visiting were a
thing of every day,
and looked up at
us as pleased and
triumphant as a child.

“Oh, what a poor,
plain garden! Hardly
a flower in it except
your bush o’ balm!”

she said. "But you do keep your garden neat, Almiry. Are you both well, an' goin' up country with me?" She came a step or two closer to meet us, with quaint politeness and quite as delightful as if she were at home. She dropped a quick little curtsey before Mrs. Todd.

“There, mother, what a girl you be! I am so pleased! I was just bewailin’ you,” said the daughter, with unwonted feeling. “I was just bewailin’ you, I was so disappointed, an’ I kep’ myself awake a good piece o’ the night scoldin’ poor William. I watched for the boat till I was ready to shed tears yisterday, and when

'twas comin' dark I
kep' making errands
out to the gate an'
down the road to see
if you wa'n't in the
doldrums somewhere
down the bay."

"There was a
head-wind, as you
know," said Mrs.
Blackett, giving me
the cap-basket, and
holding my hand
affectionately as
we walked up the

clean-swept path
to the door. "I was
partly ready to come,
but dear William said
I should be all tired
out and might get
cold, havin' to beat
all the way in. So we
give it up, and set
down and spent the
evenin' together. It
was a little rough and
windy outside, and I
guess 'twas better
judgment; we went
to bed very early and

made a good start
just at daylight. It's
been a lovely mornin'
on the water. William
thought he'd better
fetch across beyond
Bird Rocks, rowin' the
greater part o' the
way; then we sailed
from there right
over to the landin',
makin' only one tack.
William'll be in again
for me to-morrow,
so I can come back

here an' rest me
over night, an' go to
meetin' to-morrow,
and have a nice, good
visit."

"She was just havin'
her breakfast," said
Mrs. Todd, who had
listened eagerly to
the long explanation
without a word of
disapproval, while
her face shone more
and more with joy.
"You just sit right

down an' have a cup
of tea and rest you
while we make our
preparations. Oh, I
am so gratified to
think you've come!
Yes, she was just
havin' her breakfast,
and we were speakin'
of you. Where's
William?"

"He went right back;
said he expected
some schooners in
about noon after

bait, but he'll come an' have his dinner with us tomorrow, unless it rains; then next day. I laid his best things out all ready," explained Mrs. Blackett, a little anxiously. "This wind will serve him nice all the way home. Yes, I will take a cup of tea,

dear,—a cup of tea is always good; and then I'll rest a minute and be all ready to start."

"I do feel condemned for havin' such hard thoughts o' William," openly confessed Mrs. Todd. She stood before us so large and serious that we both laughed and could not find it in our hearts to convict

so rueful a culprit.

"He shall have a good dinner to-morrow, if it can be got, and I shall be real glad to see William," the confession ended handsomely, while Mrs. Blackett smiled approval and made haste to praise the tea. Then I hurried away to make sure of the grocery wagon. Whatever might be the good of the

reunion, I was going to have the pleasure and delight of a day in Mrs. Blackett's company, not to speak of Mrs. Todd's.

The early morning breeze was still blowing, and the warm, sunshiny air was of some ethereal northern sort, with a cool freshness as it came over new-fallen snow. The world was

filled with a fragrance
of fir-balsam and
the faintest flavor
of seaweed from
the ledges, bare and
brown at low tide in
the little harbor. It
was so still and so
early that the village
was but half awake.
I could hear no
voices but those of
the birds, small and
great,—the constant
song sparrows,
the clink of a

yellow-hammer over
in the woods, and
the far conversation
of some deliberate
crows. I saw William
Blackett's escaping
sail already far from
land, and Captain
Littlepage was
sitting behind his
closed window as I
passed by, watching
for some one who
never came. I tried
to speak to him, but
he did not see me.

There was a patient look on the old man's face, as if the world were a great mistake and he had nobody with whom to speak his own language or find companionship.

XVII.

A COUNTRY ROAD

Whatever doubts and anxieties I may have had about the inconvenience of the Begg's high wagon for a person of Mrs. Blackett's age and shortness, they were happily overcome by the aid of a chair and her own valiant spirit. Mrs. Todd bestowed great

care upon seating us as if we were taking passage by boat, but she finally pronounced that we were properly trimmed. When we had gone only a little way up the hill she remembered that she had left the house door wide open, though the large key was safe in her pocket. I offered to run back, but my

offer was met with lofty scorn, and we lightly dismissed the matter from our minds, until two or three miles further on we met the doctor, and Mrs. Todd asked him to stop and ask her nearest neighbor to step over and close the door if the dust seemed to blow in the afternoon.

“She’ll be there in her kitchen; she’ll hear you the minute you call; ‘twont give you no delay,” said Mrs. Todd to the doctor. “Yes, Mis’ Dennett’s right there, with the windows all open. It isn’t as if my fore door opened right on the road, anyway.” At which proof of composure Mrs. Blackett smiled wisely at me.

The doctor seemed delighted to see our guest; they were evidently the warmest friends, and I saw a look of affectionate confidence in their eyes. The good man left his carriage to speak to us, but as he took Mrs. Blackett's hand he held it a moment, and, as if merely from force of habit,

felt her pulse as they talked; then to my delight he gave the firm old wrist a commending pat.

“You’re wearing well; good for another ten years at this rate,” he assured her cheerfully, and she smiled back. “I like to keep a strict account of my old stand-bys,” and he turned to me. “Don’t you let

Mrs. Todd overdo to-day,—old folks like her are apt to be thoughtless;" and then we all laughed, and, parting, went our ways gayly.

"I suppose he puts up with your rivalry the same as ever?" asked

Mrs. Blackett. "You and he are as friendly as ever, I see, Almiry," and Almira sagely nodded.

"He's got too many long routes now to stop to 'tend to all his door patients," she said, "especially them that takes pleasure in talkin' themselves over. The doctor and me have got to be kind of

partners; he's gone
a good deal, far an'
wide. Looked tired,
didn't he? I shall
have to advise with
him an' get him off
for a good rest. He'll
take the big boat
from Rockland an' go
off up to Boston an'
mouse round among
the other doctors,
one in two or three
years, and come
home fresh as a boy.
I guess they think

consider'ble of him up there." Mrs. Todd shook the reins and reached determinedly for the whip, as if she were compelling public opinion.

Whatever energy and spirit the white horse had to begin with were soon exhausted by the steep hills and his discernment of a long expedition ahead.

We toiled slowly along. Mrs. Blackett and I sat together, and Mrs. Todd sat alone in front with much majesty and the large basket of provisions. Part of the way the road was shaded by thick woods, but we also passed one farmhouse after another on the high uplands, which we all three regarded with

deep interest, the house itself and the barns and garden-spots and poultry all having to suffer an inspection of the shrewdest sort. This was a highway quite new to me; in fact, most of my journeys with Mrs. Todd had been made afoot and between the roads, in open pasturelands. My friends stopped several times for

brief dooryard visits,
and made so many
promises of stopping
again on the way
home that I began
to wonder how
long the expedition
would last. I had
often noticed how
warmly Mrs. Todd
was greeted by
her friends, but it
was hardly to be
compared with the
feeling now shown
toward Mrs. Blackett.

**A look of delight
came to the faces of
those who recognized
the plain, dear old
figure beside me;
one revelation after
another was made of
the constant interest
and intercourse that
had linked the far
island and these
scattered farms into
a golden chain of love
and dependence.**

**“Now, we mustn’t
stop again if we can
help it,” insisted Mrs.
Todd at last. “You’ll
get tired, mother,
and you’ll think the
less o’ reunions. We
can visit along here
any day. There, if
they ain’t frying
doughnuts in this
next house, too!
These are new folks,
you know, from over
St. George way; they
took this old Talcot**

farm last year. 'Tis the best water on the road, and the check-rein's come undone—yes, we'd best delay a little and water the horse."

We stopped, and seeing a party of pleasure-seekers in holiday attire, the thin, anxious mistress of the farmhouse came out with wistful sympathy to hear

what news we might have to give. Mrs. Blackett first spied her at the half-closed door, and asked with such cheerful directness if we were trespassing that, after a few words, she went back to her kitchen and reappeared with a plateful of doughnuts.

“Entertainment for man and beast,” announced Mrs. Todd with satisfaction.

“Why, we’ve perceived there was new doughnuts all along the road, but you’re the first that has treated us.”

Our new acquaintance flushed with pleasure, but said nothing.

“They’re very nice; you’ve had good

luck with 'em," pronounced Mrs. Todd. "Yes, we've observed there was doughnuts all the way along; if one house is frying all the rest is; 'tis so with a great many things."

"I don't suppose likely you're goin' up to the Bowden

reunion?" asked the hostess as the white horse lifted his head and we were saying good-by.

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Blackett and Mrs. Todd and I, all together.

"I am connected with the family. Yes, I

expect to be there this afternoon. I've been lookin' forward to it," she told us eagerly.

"We shall see you there. Come and sit with us if it's convenient," said dear Mrs. Blackett, and we drove away.

"I wonder who she was before she was married?" said Mrs. Todd, who was

usually unerring in matters of genealogy. "She must have been one of that remote branch that lived down beyond Thomaston. We can find out this afternoon. I expect that the families'll march together, or be sorted out some way. I'm willing to own a relation that has such proper ideas of doughnuts."

"I seem to see the family looks," said Mrs. Blackett. "I wish we'd asked her name. She's a stranger, and I want to help make it pleasant for all such."

"She resembles Cousin Pa'lina Bowden about the forehead," said Mrs. Todd with decision.

We had just passed a piece of woodland

that shaded the road, and come out to some open fields beyond, when Mrs. Todd suddenly reined in the horse as if somebody had stood on the roadside and stopped her. She even gave that quick reassuring nod of her head which was usually made to answer for a bow, but

I discovered that she was looking eagerly at a tall ash-tree that grew just inside the field fence.

“I thought ‘twas goin’ to do well,” she said complacently as we went on again. “Last time I was up this way that tree was kind of drooping and discouraged. Grown trees act that way sometimes, same’s

**folks; then they'll
put right to it and
strike their roots
off into new ground
and start all over
again with real good
courage. Ash-trees
is very likely to have
poor spells; they ain't
got the resolution of
other trees."**

I listened hopefully for more; it was this peculiar wisdom that made one value Mrs. Todd's pleasant company.

"There's sometimes a good hearty tree growin' right out of the bare rock, out o' some crack that just holds the roots;" she went on to say, "right on the pitch o' one o' them bare

stony hills where you can't seem to see a wheel-barrowful o' good earth in a place, but that tree'll keep a green top in the driest summer. You lay your ear down to the ground an' you'll hear a little stream runnin'. Every such tree has got its own livin' spring; there's folk made to match 'em."

I could not help turning to look at Mrs. Blackett, close beside me. Her hands were clasped placidly in their thin black woolen gloves, and she was looking at the flowery wayside as we went slowly along, with a pleased, expectant smile. I do not think she had heard a word about the trees.

**"I just saw a nice
plant o' elecampane
growin' back there,"
she said presently to
her daughter.**

**"I haven't got my
mind on herbs
to-day," responded
Mrs. Todd, in the
most matter-of-fact
way. "I'm bent on
seeing folks," and
she shook the reins
again.**

I for one had no wish to hurry, it was so pleasant in the shady roads. The woods stood close to the road on the right; on the left were narrow fields and pastures where there were as many acres of spruces and pines as there were acres of bay and juniper and huckleberry, with a little turf between. When I

thought we were
in the heart of the
inland country, we
reached the top of
a hill, and suddenly
there lay spread out
before us a wonderful
great view of well-
cleared fields that
swept down to the
wide water of a bay.
Beyond this were
distant shores like
another country in
the midday haze
which half hid the

hills beyond, and
the faraway pale
blue mountains
on the northern
horizon. There was
a schooner with all
sails set coming
down the bay from
a white village
that was sprinkled
on the shore, and
there were many
sailboats flitting
about it. It was a
noble landscape, and
my eyes, which had

grown used to the narrow inspection of a shaded roadside, could hardly take it in.

“Why, it’s the upper bay,” said Mrs.

Todd. “You can see ‘way over into the town of Fessenden. Those farms ‘way over there are all in Fessenden. Mother used to have a sister that lived up that

shore. If we started as early's we could on a summer mornin', we couldn't get to her place from Green Island till late afternoon, even with a fair, steady breeze, and you had to strike the time just right so as to fetch up 'long o' the tide and land near the flood. 'Twas ticklish business, an' we didn't visit back an' forth as much as

mother desired. You have to go 'way down the co'st to Cold Spring Light an' round that long point,—up here's what they call the Back Shore."

"No, we were 'most always separated, my dear sister and me, after the first year she was married," said Mrs. Blackett. "We had our little families an'

plenty o' cares. We were always lookin' forward to the time we could see each other more. Now and then she'd get out to the island for a few days while her husband'd go fishin'; and once he stopped with her an' two children, and made him some flakes right there and cured all his fish for winter. We did

have a beautiful time together, sister an' me; she used to look back to it long's she lived.

"I do love to look over there where she used to live," Mrs. Blackett went on as we began to go down the hill.

"It seems as if she must still be there, though she's long been gone. She loved

their farm,—she didn't see how I got so used to our island; but somehow I was always happy from the first."

"Yes, it's very dull to me up among those slow farms," declared Mrs. Todd. "The snow troubles 'em in winter. They're all besieged by winter, as you may say; 'tis

far better by the shore than up among such places. I never thought I should like to live up country."

"Why, just see the carriages ahead of us on the next rise!" exclaimed Mrs. Blackett. "There's going to be a great gathering, don't you believe there is, Almiry? It hasn't seemed up to now as

if anybody was going but us. An' 'tis such a beautiful day, with yesterday cool and pleasant to work an' get ready, I shouldn't wonder if everybody was there, even the slow ones like Phebe Ann Brock."

Mrs. Blackett's eyes were bright with excitement, and even Mrs. Todd showed remarkable

enthusiasm. She hurried the horse and caught up with the holiday-makers ahead. "There's all the Dep'fords goin', six in the wagon," she told us joyfully; "an' Mis' Alva Tilley's folks are now risin' the hill in their new carry-all."

Mrs. Blackett pulled at the neat bow of her black

bonnet-strings, and tied them again with careful precision. "I believe your bonnet's on a little bit sideways, dear," she advised Mrs. Todd as if she were a child; but Mrs. Todd was too much occupied to pay proper heed. We began to feel a new sense of gayety and of taking part in the great occasion as we joined the little train.

XVIII.

THE BOWDEN REUNION

It is very rare in country life, where high days and holidays are few, that any occasion of general interest proves to be less than great. Such is the hidden fire of enthusiasm in the New England nature that, once given an

outlet, it shines forth with almost volcanic light and heat. In quiet neighborhoods such inward force does not waste itself upon those petty excitements of every day that belong to cities, but when, at long intervals, the altars to patriotism, to friendship, to the ties of kindred, are reared in our familiar fields, then the fires

glow, the flames
come up as if from
the inexhaustible
burning heart of the
earth; the primal fires
break through the
granite dust in which
our souls are set.
Each heart is warm
and every face shines
with the ancient
light. Such a day as
this has transfiguring
powers, and easily
makes friends of
those who have

been cold-hearted,
and gives to those
who are dumb their
chance to speak, and
lends some beauty to
the plainest face.

“Oh, I expect I shall
meet friends today
that I haven’t seen
in a long while,” said
Mrs. Blackett with
deep satisfaction.
“‘Twill bring out a

good many of the old folks, 'tis such a lovely day. I'm always glad not to have them disappointed."

"I guess likely the best of 'em'll be there," answered Mrs. Todd with gentle humor, stealing a glance at me.

"There's one thing certain: there's nothing takes in this whole neighborhood

like anything related to the Bowdens. Yes, I do feel that when you call upon the Bowdens you may expect most families to rise up between the Landing and the far end of the Back Cove. Those that aren't kin by blood are kin by marriage."

"There used to be an old story goin' about when I was

a girl," said Mrs. Blackett, with much amusement. "There was a great many more Bowdens then than there are now, and the folks was all setting in meeting a dreadful hot Sunday afternoon, and a scatter-witted little bound girl came running to the meetin'-house door all out o' breath from somewheres in

the neighborhood.
'Mis' Bowden, Mis'
Bowden!' says she.
'Your baby's in a
fit!' They used to
tell that the whole
congregation was
up on its feet in a
minute and right out
into the aisles. All
the Mis' Bowdens
was setting right
out for home; the
minister stood there
in the pulpit tryin'
to keep sober, an'

all at once he burst right out laughin'. He was a very nice man, they said, and he said he'd better give 'em the benediction, and they could hear the sermon next Sunday, so he kept it over. My mother was there, and she thought certain 'twas me."

"None of our family was ever subject to fits," interrupted Mrs.

Todd severely. "No, we never had fits, none of us; and 'twas lucky we didn't 'way out there to Green Island. Now these folks right in front; dear sakes knows the bunches o' soothing catnip an' yarrow I've had to favor old Mis' Evins with dryin'! You can see it right in their expressions, all them Evins folks. There, just you look

up to the crossroads,
mother," she
suddenly exclaimed.
"See all the teams
ahead of us. And,
oh, look down on the
bay; yes, look down
on the bay! See what
a sight o' boats,
all headin' for the
Bowden place cove!"

"Oh, ain't it
beautiful!" said Mrs.
Blackett, with all
the delight of a girl.

She stood up in the high wagon to see everything, and when she sat down again she took fast hold of my hand.

“Hadn’t you better urge the horse a little, Almiry?” she asked. “He’s had it easy as we came along, and he can rest when we get

there. The others are some little ways ahead, and I don't want to lose a minute."

We watched the boats drop their sails one by one in the cove as we drove along the high land. The old Bowden house stood, low-storied and broad-roofed, in its green fields as if

it were a motherly
brown hen waiting
for the flock that
came straying
toward it from every
direction. The first
Bowden settler
had made his home
there, and it was still
the Bowden farm;
five generations of
sailors and farmers
and soldiers had
been its children.
And presently Mrs.
Blackett showed me

the stone-walled
burying-ground
that stood like a
little fort on a knoll
overlooking the bay,
but, as she said,
there were plenty of
scattered Bowdens
who were not laid
there,—some lost
at sea, and some
out West, and some
who died in the war;
most of the home
graves were those of
women.

We could see now
that there were
different footpaths
from along shore
and across country.
In all these there
were straggling
processions walking
in single file, like old
illustrations of the
Pilgrim's Progress.
There was a crowd
about the house as
if huge bees were
swarming in the lilac
bushes. Beyond the

fields and cove a higher point of land ran out into the bay, covered with woods which must have kept away much of the northwest wind in winter. Now there was a pleasant look of shade and shelter there for the great family meeting.

We hurried on our way, beginning to feel as if we were

very late, and it was a great satisfaction at last to turn out of the stony highroad into a green lane shaded with old apple-trees. Mrs. Todd encouraged the horse until he fairly pranced with gayety as we drove round to the front of the house on the soft turf. There was

an instant cry of rejoicing, and two or three persons ran toward us from the busy group.

“Why, dear Mis’ Blackett!—here’s Mis’ Blackett!” I heard them say, as if it were pleasure enough for one day to have a sight of her. Mrs. Todd turned to me with a lovely look of triumph and

self-forgetfulness.
An elderly man
who wore the look
of a prosperous
sea-captain put
up both arms and
lifted Mrs. Blackett
down from the high
wagon like a child,
and kissed her with
hearty affection. "I
was master afraid
she wouldn't be
here," he said,
looking at Mrs. Todd
with a face like

a happy sunburnt schoolboy, while everybody crowded round to give their welcome.

“Mother’s always the queen,” said Mrs. Todd. “Yes, they’ll all make everything of mother; she’ll have a lovely time to-day. I wouldn’t have had her miss it, and there

won't be a thing
she'll ever regret,
except to mourn
because William
wa'n't here."

Mrs. Blackett having
been properly
escorted to the
house, Mrs. Todd
received her own
full share of honor,
and some of the
men, with a simple
kindness that was
the soul of chivalry,

waited upon us and
our baskets and led
away the white horse.
I already knew some
of Mrs. Todd's friends
and kindred, and
felt like an adopted
Bowden in this happy
moment. It seemed to
be enough for anyone
to have arrived by
the same conveyance
as Mrs. Blackett,
who presently had
her court inside
the house, while

Mrs. Todd, large, hospitable, and preeminent, was the centre of a rapidly increasing crowd about the lilac bushes. Small companies were continually coming up the long green slope from the water, and nearly all the boats had come to shore. I counted three or four that were baffled by the light breeze,

but before long all the Bowdens, small and great, seemed to have assembled, and we started to go up to the grove across the field.

Out of the chattering crowd of noisy children, and large-waisted women whose best black dresses fell straight to the ground in generous folds, and

sunburnt men who looked as serious as if it were town-meeting day, there suddenly came silence and order. I saw the straight, soldierly little figure of a man who bore a fine resemblance to Mrs. Blackett, and who appeared to marshal us with perfect ease. He was imperative enough, but with a

grand military sort of courtesy, and bore himself with solemn dignity of importance. We were sorted out according to some clear design of his own, and stood as speechless as a troop to await his orders. Even the children were ready to march together, a pretty flock, and at the last moment Mrs. Blackett and a

few distinguished companions, the ministers and those who were very old, came out of the house together and took their places. We ranked by fours, and even then we made a long procession.

There was a wide path mowed for us across the field, and, as we moved along, the birds flew up out

of the thick second crop of clover, and the bees hummed as if it still were June. There was a flashing of white gulls over the water where the fleet of boats rode the low waves together in the cove, swaying their small masts as if they kept time to our steps. The splash of the water could be heard faintly, yet still

be heard; we might have been a company of ancient Greeks going to celebrate a victory, or to worship the god of harvests, in the grove above. It was strangely moving to see this and to make part of it. The sky, the sea, have watched poor humanity at its rites so long; we were no more a New England family celebrating its

own existence and simple progress; we carried the tokens and inheritance of all such households from which this had descended, and were only the latest of our line. We possessed the instincts of a far, forgotten childhood; I found myself thinking that we ought to be carrying green branches and singing as we went. So we

came to the thick shaded grove still silent, and were set in our places by the straight trees that swayed together and let sunshine through here and there like a single golden leaf that flickered down, vanishing in the cool shade.

The grove was so large that the great family looked far

smaller than it had in the open field; there was a thick growth of dark pines and firs with an occasional maple or oak that gave a gleam of color like a bright window in the great roof. On three sides we could see the water, shining behind the tree-trunks, and feel the cool salt breeze that began to come up with the tide just as

the day reached its
highest point of heat.
We could see the
green sunlit field we
had just crossed as
if we looked out at
it from a dark room,
and the old house
and its lilacs standing
placidly in the sun,
and the great barn
with a stockade
of carriages from
which two or three
care-taking men who
had lingered were

coming across the field together. Mrs. Todd had taken off her warm gloves and looked the picture of content.

“There!” she exclaimed. “I’ve always meant to have you see this place, but I never looked for such a beautiful opportunity—weather an’ occasion both made to match. Yes,

it suits me: I don't ask no more. I want to know if you saw mother walkin' at the head! It choked me right up to see mother at the head, walkin' with the ministers," and Mrs. Todd turned away to hide the feelings she could not instantly control.

“Who was the marshal?” I hastened to ask. “Was he an old soldier?”

“Don’t he do well?” answered Mrs. Todd with satisfaction.

“He don’t often have such a chance to show off his gifts,” said Mrs. Caplin, a friend from the Landing who had joined us. “That’s Sant Bowden; he

always takes the lead, such days. Good for nothing else most o' his time; trouble is, he"—

I turned with interest to hear the worst. Mrs. Caplin's tone was both zealous and impressive.

"Stim'lates," she explained scornfully.

"No, Santin never was in the war,"

said Mrs. Todd with
lofty indifference.

"It was a cause of
real distress to him.
He kep' enlistin',
and traveled far an'
wide about here, an'
even took the bo't
and went to Boston
to volunteer; but he
ain't a sound man,
an' they wouldn't
have him. They say
he knows all their
tactics, an' can tell
all about the battle

o' Waterloo well's
he can Bunker Hill.
I told him once the
country'd lost a great
general, an' I meant
it, too."

"I expect you're
near right," said
Mrs. Caplin, a little
crestfallen and
apologetic.

"I be right," insisted
Mrs. Todd with much
amiability. "'Twas
most too bad to

cramp him down to his peaceful trade, but he's a most excellent shoemaker at his best, an' he always says it's a trade that gives him time to think an' plan his maneuvers. Over to the Port they always invite him to march Decoration Day, same as the rest, an' he does look noble; he comes of soldier stock."

I had been noticing with great interest the curiously French type of face which prevailed in this rustic company. I had said to myself before that Mrs. Blackett was plainly of French descent, in both her appearance and her charming gifts, but this is not surprising when one has learned how large a proportion of

the early settlers on this northern coast of New England were of Huguenot blood, and that it is the Norman Englishman, not the Saxon, who goes adventuring to a new world.

“They used to say in old times,” said Mrs. Todd modestly, “that our family came of very high folks in France, and one

of 'em was a great
general in some
o' the old wars. I
sometimes think that
Santin's ability has
come 'way down from
then. 'Tain't nothin'
he's ever acquired;
'twas born in him. I
don't know's he ever
saw a fine parade,
or met with those
that studied up such
things. He's figured
it all out an' got his
papers so he knows

how to aim a cannon right for William's fish-house five miles out on Green Island, or up there on Burnt Island where the signal is. He had it all over to me one day, an' I tried hard to appear interested. His life's all in it, but he will have those poor gloomy spells come over him now an' then, an' then he has to drink."

Mrs. Caplin gave a heavy sigh.

“There’s a great many such strayaway folks, just as there is plants,” continued Mrs. Todd, who was nothing if not botanical. “I know of just one sprig of laurel that grows over back here in a wild spot, an’ I never could hear of no other on this coast.

I had a large bunch brought me once from Massachusetts way, so I know it. This piece grows in an open spot where you'd think 'twould do well, but it's sort o' poor-lookin'. I've visited it time an' again, just to notice its poor blooms. 'Tis a real Sant Bowden, out of its own place."

Mrs. Caplin looked bewildered and blank. "Well, all I know is, last year he worked out some kind of plan so's to parade the county conference in platoons, and got 'em all flustered up tryin' to sense his ideas of a holler square," she burst forth. "They was holler enough anyway after ridin' 'way down from up country into the salt

air, and they'd been
treated to a sermon
on faith an' works
from old Fayther
Harlow that never
knows when to cease.
'Twa'n't no time for
tactics then,—they
wa'n't a'thinkin' of
the church military.
Sant, he couldn't do
nothin' with 'em. All
he thinks of, when he
sees a crowd, is how

to march 'em. 'Tis all very well when he don't 'tempt too much. He never did act like other folks."

"Ain't I just been maintainin' that he ain't like 'em?" urged Mrs. Todd decidedly. "Strange folks has got to have strange ways, for what I see."

"Somebody observed once that you could

pick out the likeness of 'most every sort of a foreigner when you looked about you in our parish," said Sister Caplin, her face brightening with sudden illumination. "I didn't see the bearin' of it then quite so plain. I always did think Mari' Harris resembled a Chineese."

"Mari' Harris was pretty as a child,

I remember," said the pleasant voice of Mrs. Blackett, who, after receiving the affectionate greetings of nearly the whole company, came to join us,—to see, as she insisted, that we were out of mischief.

"Yes, Mari' was one o' them pretty little lambs that make dreadful homely old

sheep," replied Mrs. Todd with energy. "Cap'n Littlepage never'd look so disconsolate if she was any sort of a proper person to direct things. She might divert him; yes, she might divert the old gentleman, an' let him think he had his own way, 'stead o' arguing everything

down to the bare bone. 'Twouldn't hurt her to sit down an' hear his great stories once in a while."

"The stories are very interesting," I ventured to say.

"Yes, you always catch yourself a-thinkin' what if they all was true, and he had the right of it," answered Mrs.

Todd. "He's a good sight better company, though dreamy, than such sordid creatur's as Mari' Harris."

"Live and let live," said dear old Mrs. Blackett gently. "I haven't seen the captain for a good while, now that I

ain't so constant to meetin'," she added wistfully. "We always have known each other."

"Why, if it is a good pleasant day tomorrow, I'll get William to call an' invite the capt'in to dinner. William'll be in early so's to pass up the street without meetin' anybody."

“There, they’re callin’ out it’s time to set the tables,” said Mrs. Caplin, with great excitement.

“Here’s Cousin Sarah Jane Blackett! Well, I am pleased, certain!” exclaimed Mrs. Todd, with unaffected delight; and these kindred spirits met and parted with the promise of a good talk later on.

After this there was no more time for conversation until we were seated in order at the long tables.

"I'm one that always dreads seeing some o' the folks that I don't like, at such a time as this," announced Mrs. Todd privately to me after a season of reflection. We were just waiting

for the feast to
begin. "You wouldn't
think such a great
creatur' 's I be could
feel all over pins an'
needles. I remember,
the day I promised
to Nathan, how it
come over me, just's
I was feelin' happy's
I could, that I'd got
to have an own
cousin o' his for my
near relation all the
rest o' my life, an'
it seemed as if die I

should. Poor Nathan saw somethin' had crossed me,—he had very nice feelings,—and when he asked what 'twas, I told him. 'I never could like her myself,' said he. 'You sha'n't be bothered, dear,' he says; an' 'twas one o' the things that made me set a good deal by Nathan, he did not make a habit of always opposin',

like some men. 'Yes,' says I, 'but think o' Thanksgiving times an' funerals; she's our relation, an' we've got to own her.' Young folks don't think o' those things. There she goes now, do let's pray her by!" said Mrs. Todd, with an alarming transition from general opinions to particular animosities. "I hate

her just the same
as I always did; but
she's got on a real
pretty dress. I do try
to remember that
she's Nathan's cousin.
Oh dear, well; she's
gone by after all,
an' ain't seen me. I
expected she'd come
pleasantin' round just
to show off an' say
afterwards she was
acquainted."

This was so different from Mrs. Todd's usual largeness of mind that I had a moment's uneasiness; but the cloud passed quickly over her spirit, and was gone with the offender.

There never was a more generous out-of-door feast along the coast than the Bowden family set forth that day.

To call it a picnic would make it seem trivial. The great tables were edged with pretty oak-leaf trimming, which the boys and girls made. We brought flowers from the fence-thickets of the great field; and out of the disorder of flowers and provisions suddenly appeared as orderly a scheme for the feast as the

marshal had shaped for the procession. I began to respect the Bowdens for their inheritance of good taste and skill and a certain pleasing gift of formality. Something made them do all these things in a finer way than most country people would have done them. As I looked up and down the tables there

was a good cheer, a grave soberness that shone with pleasure, a humble dignity of bearing. There were some who should have sat below the salt for lack of this good breeding; but they were not many. So, I said to myself, their ancestors may have sat in the great hall of some old French house in the Middle Ages, when

battles and sieges
and processions
and feasts were
familiar things. The
ministers and Mrs.
Blackett, with a
few of their rank
and age, were put
in places of honor,
and for once that
I looked any other
way I looked twice at
Mrs. Blackett's face,
serene and mindful

of privilege and responsibility, the mistress by simple fitness of this great day.

Mrs. Todd looked up at the roof of green trees, and then carefully surveyed the company. "I see 'em better now they're all settin' down," she said with satisfaction. "There's old Mr. Gilbraith and

his sister. I wish they were sittin' with us; they're not among folks they can parley with, an' they look disappointed."

As the feast went on, the spirits of my companion steadily rose. The excitement of an unexpectedly great occasion was a subtle stimulant to her disposition, and I could see that

sometimes when Mrs. Todd had seemed limited and heavily domestic, she had simply grown sluggish for lack of proper surroundings. She was not so much reminiscent now as expectant, and as alert and gay as a girl. We who were her neighbors were full of gayety, which was but the reflected light from her

beaming countenance. It was not the first time that I was full of wonder at the waste of human ability in this world, as a botanist wonders at the wastefulness of nature, the thousand seeds that die, the unused provision of every sort. The reserve force of society grows more and more amazing to one's thought. More

than one face among the Bowdens showed that only opportunity and stimulus were lacking,—a narrow set of circumstances had caged a fine able character and held it captive. One sees exactly the same types in a country gathering as in the most brilliant city company. You are safe to be

**understood if the
spirit of your speech
is the same for one
neighbor as for the
other.**

XIX.

THE FEAST'S END

The feast was a noble feast, as has already been said. There was an elegant ingenuity displayed in the form of pies which delighted my heart. Once acknowledge that an American pie is far to be preferred to its humble ancestor, the English tart,

and it is joyful to be reassured at a Bowden reunion that invention has not yet failed. Beside a delightful variety of material, the decorations went beyond all my former experience; dates and names were wrought in lines of pastry and frosting on the tops. There was even more elaborate reading matter

on an excellent
early-apple pie which
we began to share
and eat, precept
upon precept.

Mrs. Todd helped
me generously to
the whole word
BOWDEN, and
consumed REUNION
herself, save an
undecipherable
fragment; but the
most renowned essay
in cookery on the
tables was a model

of the old Bowden house made of durable gingerbread, with all the windows and doors in the right places, and sprigs of genuine lilac set at the front. It must have been baked in sections, in one of the last of the great brick ovens, and fastened together on the morning of the day. There was a general sigh when

this fell into ruin
at the feast's end,
and it was shared
by a great part of
the assembly, not
without seriousness,
and as if it were a
pledge and token
of loyalty. I met
the maker of the
gingerbread house,
which had called up
lively remembrances

of a childish story. She had the gleaming eye of an enthusiast and a look of high ideals.

"I could just as well have made it all of frosted cake," she said, "but 'twouldn't have been the right shade; the old house, as you observe, was never painted, and I concluded that plain gingerbread would

represent it best. It wasn't all I expected it would be," she said sadly, as many an artist had said before her of his work.

There were speeches by the ministers; and there proved to be a historian among the Bowdens, who gave some fine anecdotes of the family history; and then appeared a poetess, whom Mrs.

Todd regarded with wistful compassion and indulgence, and when the long faded garland of verses came to an appealing end, she turned to me with words of praise.

“Sounded pretty,” said the generous listener. “Yes, I thought she did very well. We went to school together,

an' Mary Anna had
a very hard time;
trouble was, her
mother thought
she'd given birth to
a genius, an' Mary
Anna's come to
believe it herself.
There, I don't know
what we should have
done without her;
there ain't nobody
else that can write
poetry between here
and 'way up towards
Rockland; it adds a

great deal at such
a time. When she
speaks o' those that
are gone, she feels
it all, and so does
everybody else, but
she harps too much.
I'd laid half of that
away for next time,
if I was Mary Anna.
There comes mother
to speak to her, an'

old Mr. Gilbreath's sister; now she'll be heartened right up. Mother'll say just the right thing."

The leave-takings were as affecting as the meetings of these old friends had been. There were enough young persons at the reunion, but it is the old who really value such opportunities;

as for the young, it is the habit of every day to meet their comrades,—the time of separation has not come. To see the joy with which these elder kinsfolk and acquaintances had looked in one another's faces, and the lingering touch of their friendly hands; to see these affectionate meetings and then the

reluctant partings, gave one a new idea of the isolation in which it was possible to live in that after all thinly settled region. They did not expect to see one another again very soon; the steady, hard work on the farms, the difficulty of getting from place to place, especially in winter when boats were laid up, gave

double value to any occasion which could bring a large number of families together. Even funerals in this country of the pointed firs were not without their social advantages and satisfactions. I heard the words "next summer" repeated many times, though summer was still ours and all the leaves were green.

The boats began to put out from shore, and the wagons to drive away. Mrs. Blackett took me into the old house when we came back from the grove: it was her father's birthplace and early home, and she had spent much of her own childhood there with her grandmother. She spoke of those days as if they had

but lately passed;
in fact, I could
imagine that the
house looked almost
exactly the same to
her. I could see the
brown rafters of the
unfinished roof as I
looked up the steep
staircase, though
the best room was
as handsome with its

good wainscoting and touch of ornament on the cornice as any old room of its day in a town.

Some of the guests who came from a distance were still sitting in the best room when we went in to take leave of the master and mistress of the house. We all said eagerly what

a pleasant day it had been, and how swiftly the time had passed. Perhaps it is the great national anniversaries which our country has lately kept, and the soldiers' meetings that take place everywhere, which have made reunions of every sort the fashion. This one, at least, had been very interesting.

I fancied that old feuds had been overlooked, and the old saying that blood is thicker than water had again proved itself true, though from the variety of names one argued a certain adulteration of the Bowden traits and belongings. Clannishness is an instinct of the heart,—it is more

than a birthright, or a custom; and lesser rights were forgotten in the claim to a common inheritance.

We were among the very last to return to our proper lives and lodgings. I came near to feeling like a true Bowden, and parted from certain new

friends as if they
were old friends; we
were rich with the
treasure of a new
remembrance.

At last we were in
the high wagon again;
the old white horse
had been well fed in
the Bowden barn, and
we drove away and
soon began to climb
the long hill toward
the wooded ridge.
The road was new to

me, as roads always are, going back. Most of our companions had been full of anxious thoughts of home,—of the cows, or of young children likely to fall into disaster,—but we had no reasons for haste, and drove slowly along, talking and resting by the way. Mrs. Todd said once that she really hoped her front door

had been shut on account of the dust blowing in, but added that nothing made any weight on her mind except not to forget to turn a few late mullein leaves that were drying on a newspaper in the little loft. Mrs. Blackett and I gave our word of honor that we would remind her of this heavy responsibility. The

way seemed short, we had so much to talk about. We climbed hills where we could see the great bay and the islands, and then went down into shady valleys where the air began to feel like evening, cool and camp with a fragrance of wet ferns. Mrs. Todd alighted once or twice, refusing all

assistance in securing some boughs of a rare shrub which she valued for its bark, though she proved incommunicative as to her reasons. We passed the house where we had been so kindly entertained with doughnuts earlier in the day, and found it closed and deserted, which was a disappointment.

“They must have stopped to tea somewheres and thought they’d finish up the day,” said Mrs. Todd. “Those that enjoyed it best’ll want to get right home so’s to think it over.”

"I didn't see the woman there after all, did you?" asked Mrs. Blackett as the horse stopped to drink at the trough.

"Oh yes, I spoke with her," answered Mrs. Todd, with but scant interest or approval. "She ain't a member o' our family."

"I thought you said she resembled Cousin Pa'lina Bowden about the forehead," suggested Mrs. Blackett.

"Well, she don't," answered Mrs. Todd impatiently. "I ain't one that's ord'narily mistaken about family likenesses, and she didn't seem to meet with friends, so I went square up to

her. 'I expect you're a Bowden by your looks,' says I. 'Yes, I can take it you're one o' the Bowdens.' 'Lor', no,' says she. 'Dennett was my maiden name, but I married a Bowden for my first husband. I thought I'd come an' just see what was a-goin' on!"

Mrs. Blackett laughed heartily. "I'm goin'

to remember to tell William o' that," she said. "There, Almiry, the only thing that's troubled me all this day is to think how William would have enjoyed it. I do so wish William had been there."

"I sort of wish he had, myself," said Mrs. Todd frankly.

"There wa'n't many old folks there,

somehow," said Mrs. Blackett, with a touch of sadness in her voice. "There ain't so many to come as there used to be, I'm aware, but I expected to see more."

"I thought they turned out pretty well, when you come to think of it; why, everybody was sayin' so an'

feelin' gratified," answered Mrs. Todd hastily with pleasing unconsciousness; then I saw the quick color flash into her cheek, and presently she made some excuse to turn and steal an anxious look at her mother. Mrs. Blackett was smiling and thinking about her happy day, though she began to look a

little tired. Neither of my companions was troubled by her burden of years. I hoped in my heart that I might be like them as I lived on into age, and then smiled to think that I too was no longer very young. So we always keep the same hearts, though our outer framework fails and shows the touch of time.

“‘Twas pretty when they sang the hymn, wasn't it?” asked Mrs. Blackett at suppertime, with real enthusiasm. “There was such a plenty o' men's voices; where I sat it did sound beautiful. I had to stop and listen when they came to the last verse.”

I saw that Mrs. Todd's broad shoulders

began to shake.

"There was good singers there; yes, there was excellent singers," she agreed heartily, putting down her teacup, "but I chanced to drift alongside Mis' Peter Bowden o' Great Bay, an' I couldn't help thinkin' if she was as far out o' town as she was out o' tune, she wouldn't get back in a day."

XX. ALONG SHORE

One day as I went along the shore beyond the old wharves and the newer, high-stepped fabric of the steamer landing, I saw that all the boats were beached, and the slack water period of the early afternoon prevailed. Nothing was going

on, not even the most leisurely of occupations, like baiting trawls or mending nets, or repairing lobster pots; the very boats seemed to be taking an afternoon nap in the sun. I could hardly discover a distant sail as I looked seaward, except a weather-beaten lobster smack, which seemed

to have been taken
for a plaything by
the light airs that
blew about the bay.
It drifted and turned
about so aimlessly
in the wide reach off
Burnt Island, that I
suspected there was
nobody at the wheel,
or that she might
have parted her rusty
anchor chain while all
the crew were asleep.

I watched her for a minute or two; she was the old Miranda, owned by some of the Caplins, and I knew her by an odd shaped patch of newish duck that was set into the peak of her dingy mainsail. Her vagaries offered such an exciting subject for conversation that my heart rejoiced at the sound of a

hoarse voice behind me. At that moment, before I had time to answer, I saw something large and shapeless flung from the Miranda's deck that splashed the water high against her black side, and my companion gave a satisfied chuckle. The old lobster smack's sail caught the breeze again at this moment, and

she moved off down the bay. Turning, I found old Elijah Tilley, who had come softly out of his dark fish-house, as if it were a burrow.

“Boy got kind o’ drowsy steerin’ of her; Monroe he hove him right overboard; ‘wake now fast enough,” explained Mr. Tilley, and we laughed together.

I was delighted,
for my part, that
the vicissitudes
and dangers of the
Miranda, in a rocky
channel, should
have given me this
opportunity to make
acquaintance with
an old fisherman to
whom I had never
spoken. At first he
had seemed to be
one of those evasive
and uncomfortable
persons who are so

suspicious of you
that they make you
almost suspicious of
yourself. Mr. Elijah
Tilley appeared to
regard a stranger
with scornful
indifference. You
might see him
standing on the
pebble beach or in a
fish-house doorway,
but when you came
nearer he was gone.
He was one of the
small company of

elderly, gaunt-shaped
great fisherman
whom I used to like
to see leading up
a deep-laden boat
by the head, as if it
were a horse, from
the water's edge to
the steep slope of
the pebble beach.
There were four of
these large old men
at the Landing, who
were the survivors of
an earlier and more
vigorous generation.

There was an alliance and understanding between them, so close that it was apparently speechless. They gave much time to watching one another's boats go out or come in; they lent a ready hand at tending one another's lobster traps in rough weather; they helped to clean the fish or to sliver porgies

for the trawls, as if they were in close partnership; and when a boat came in from deep-sea fishing they were never too far out of the way, and hastened to help carry it ashore, two by two, splashing alongside, or holding its steady head, as if it were a willful sea colt. As a matter of fact no boat could help being steady

and way-wise under
their instant direction
and companionship.
Abel's boat and
Jonathan Bowden's
boat were as distinct
and experienced
personalities as the
men themselves,
and as inexpressive.
Arguments and
opinions were
unknown to the
conversation of
these ancient friends;
you would as soon

have expected to hear small talk in a company of elephants as to hear old Mr. Bowden or Elijah Tilley and their two mates waste breath upon any form of trivial gossip. They made brief statements to one another from time to time. As you came to know them you wondered more and more that they

should talk at all.
Speech seemed to be
a light and elegant
accomplishment, and
their unexpected
acquaintance with
its arts made them
of new value to
the listener. You
felt almost as if
a landmark pine
should suddenly
address you in regard
to the weather,

or a lofty-minded
old camel make a
remark as you stood
respectfully near him
under the circus tent.

I often wondered
a great deal about
the inner life and
thought of these
self-contained old
fishermen; their
minds seemed to be
fixed upon nature
and the elements
rather than upon

any contrivances of man, like politics or theology. My friend, Captain Bowden, who was the nephew of the eldest of this group, regarded them with deference; but he did not belong to their secret companionship, though he was neither young nor talkative.

**"They've gone
together ever since
they were boys,
they know most
everything about the
sea amon'st them,"
he told me once.**

**"They was always
just as you see
'em now since the
memory of man."**

**These ancient
seafarers had
houses and lands not
outwardly different**

from other Dunnet
Landing dwellings,
and two of them
were fathers of
families, but their
true dwelling places
were the sea, and
the stony beach that
edged its familiar
shore, and the fish-
houses, where much
salt brine from the
mackerel kits had
soaked the very
timbers into a state
of brown permanence

and petrification. It had also affected the old fishermen's hard complexions, until one fancied that when Death claimed them it could only be with the aid, not of any slender modern dart, but the good serviceable harpoon of a seventeenth century woodcut.

Elijah Tilley was such an evasive,

discouraged-looking person, heavy-headed, and stooping so that one could never look him in the face, that even after his friendly exclamation about Monroe Pennell, the lobster smack's skipper, and the sleepy boy, I did not venture at once to speak again. Mr. Tilley was carrying a small haddock

in one hand, and presently shifted it to the other hand lest it might touch my skirt. I knew that my company was accepted, and we walked together a little way.

“You mean to have a good supper,” I ventured to say, by way of friendliness.

“Goin’ to have this ‘ere haddock an’

some o' my good
baked potatoes;
must eat to live,"
responded my
companion with
great pleasantness
and open approval.
I found that I had
suddenly left the
forbidding coast
and come into the
smooth little harbor
of friendship.

"You ain't never been
up to my place," said

the old man. "Folks don't come now as they used to; no, 'tain't no use to ask folks now. My poor dear she was a great hand to draw young company."

I remembered that Mrs. Todd had once said that this old fisherman had been sore stricken and unconsolated at the death of his wife.

"I should like very much to come," said I. "Perhaps you are going to be at home later on?"

Mr. Tilley agreed, by a sober nod, and went his way bent-shouldered and with a rolling gait. There was a new patch high on the shoulder of his old waistcoat, which corresponded to the renewing of

the Miranda's mainsail
down the bay, and
I wondered if his
own fingers, clumsy
with much deep-sea
fishing, had set it in.

"Was there a good
catch to-day?" I
asked, stopping a
moment. "I didn't
happen to be on the
shore when the boats
came in."

"No; all come
in pretty light,"

answered Mr. Tilley.
"Addicks an' Bowden
they done the best;
Abel an' me we
had but a slim fare.
We went out 'arly,
but not so 'arly as
sometimes; looked
like a poor mornin'.
I got nine haddick,
all small, and seven
fish; the rest on 'em
got more fish than
haddick. Well, I don't
expect they feel like
bitin' every day; we

l'arn to humor 'em a little, an' let 'em have their way 'bout it. These plaguey dog-fish kind of worry 'em." Mr. Tilley pronounced the last sentence with much sympathy, as if he looked upon himself as a true friend of all the haddock and codfish that lived on the fishing grounds, and so we parted.

Later in the afternoon I went along the beach again until I came to the foot of Mr. Tilley's land, and found his rough track across the cobblestones and rocks to the field edge, where there was a heavy piece of old wreck timber, like a ship's bone, full of tree-nails. From this a little footpath, narrow with

one man's treading,
led up across the
small green field that
made Mr. Tilley's
whole estate, except
a straggling pasture
that tilted on edge
up the steep hillside
beyond the house
and road. I could hear
the tinkle-tankle of a
cow-bell somewhere
among the spruces
by which the pasture
was being walked
over and forested

from every side;
it was likely to be
called the wood lot
before long, but the
field was unmolested.
I could not see
a bush or a brier
anywhere within its
walls, and hardly a
stray pebble showed
itself. This was
most surprising in
that country of firm
ledges, and scattered
stones which all the
walls that industry

could devise had
hardly begun to clear
away off the land.

In the narrow field I
noticed some stout
stakes, apparently
planted at random in
the grass and among
the hills of potatoes,
but carefully painted
yellow and white to
match the house, a
neat sharp-edged
little dwelling, which
looked strangely
modern for its owner.

I should have much
sooner believed
that the smart
young wholesale
egg merchant of
the Landing was its
occupant than Mr.
Tilley, since a man's
house is really but
his larger body,
and expresses in a
way his nature and
character.

I went up the field,
following the smooth

little path to the side door. As for using the front door, that was a matter of great ceremony; the long grass grew close against the high stone step, and a snowberry bush leaned over it, top-heavy with the weight of a morning-glory vine that had managed to take what the fishermen might call a half hitch

about the door-knob. Elijah Tilley came to the side door to receive me; he was knitting a blue yarn stocking without looking on, and was warmly dressed for the season in a thick blue flannel shirt with white crockery buttons, a faded waistcoat and trousers heavily patched at the knees. These

were not his fishing clothes. There was something delightful in the grasp of his hand, warm and clean, as if it never touched anything but the comfortable woolen yarn, instead of cold sea water and slippery fish.

“What are the painted stakes for, down in the field?” I hastened to ask, and

he came out a step or two along the path to see; and looked at the stakes as if his attention were called to them for the first time.

“Folks laughed at me when I first bought this place an’ come here to live,” he explained. “They said ‘twa’n’t no kind of a field privilege at all; no place to raise

anything, all full o'
stones. I was aware
'twas good land, an'
I worked some on
it—odd times when
I didn't have nothin'
else on hand—till I
cleared them loose
stones all out. You
never see a prettier
piece than 'tis now;
now did ye? Well,
as for them painted
marks, them's my
buoys. I struck on to
some heavy rocks

that didn't show none, but a plow'd be liable to ground on 'em, an' so I ketched holt an' buoyed 'em same's you see. They don't trouble me no more'n if they wa'n't there."

"You haven't been to sea for nothing," I said laughing.

"One trade helps another," said Elijah with an amiable

smile. "Come right in an' set down. Come in an' rest ye," he exclaimed, and led the way into his comfortable kitchen. The sunshine poured in at the two further windows, and a cat was curled up sound asleep on the table that stood between them. There was a new-looking light oilcloth of a tiled pattern on the floor,

and a crockery
teapot, large for a
household of only
one person, stood
on the bright stove.
I ventured to say
that somebody must
be a very good
housekeeper.

“That’s me,”
acknowledged the
old fisherman with
frankness. “There
ain’t nobody here
but me. I try to

keep things looking right, same's poor dear left 'em. You set down here in this chair, then you can look off an' see the water. None on 'em thought I was goin' to get along alone, no way, but I wa'n't goin' to have my house turned upsi' down an' all changed about; no, not to please nobody. I was the only one knew just how she

liked to have things set, poor dear, an' I said I was goin' to make shift, and I have made shift. I'd rather tough it out alone." And he sighed heavily, as if to sigh were his familiar consolation.

We were both silent for a minute; the old man looked out the window, as if he had forgotten I was there.

“You must miss her very much?” I said at last.

“I do miss her,” he answered, and sighed again. “Folks all kep’

repeatin' that time
would ease me, but I
can't find it does. No,
I miss her just the
same every day."

"How long is it since
she died?" I asked.

"Eight year now,
come the first of
October. It don't
seem near so long.
I've got a sister that
comes and stops
'long o' me a little
spell, spring an'

fall, an' odd times
if I send after her.
I ain't near so good
a hand to sew as I
be to knit, and she's
very quick to set
everything to rights.
She's a married
woman with a family;
her son's folks lives
at home, an' I can't
make no great claim
on her time. But it
makes me a kind o'
good excuse, when
I do send, to help

her a little; she ain't none too well off. Poor dear always liked her, and we used to contrive our ways together. 'Tis full as easy to be alone. I set here an' think it all over, an' think considerable when the weather's bad to go outside. I get so some days it feels as if poor dear might step right back into this kitchen.

I keep a-watchin'
them doors as if she
might step in to ary
one. Yes, ma'am, I
keep a-lookin' off
an' droppin' o' my
stitches; that's just
how it seems. I can't
git over losin' of her
no way nor no how.
Yes, ma'am, that's
just how it seems to
me."

I did not say
anything, and he did
not look up.

"I git feelin' so
sometimes I have to
lay everything by
an' go out door. She
was a sweet pretty
creatur' long's she
lived," the old man
added mournfully.

"There's that little
rockin' chair o' her'n,
I set an' notice it an'

think how strange
'tis a creatur' like
her should be gone
an' that chair be here
right in its old place."

"I wish I had known
her; Mrs. Todd told
me about your wife
one day," I said.

"You'd have liked to
come and see her; all
the folks did," said
poor Elijah. "She'd
been so pleased to
hear everything and

see somebody new
that took such an
int'rest. She had a
kind o' gift to make
it pleasant for folks.
I guess likely Almiry
Todd told you she
was a pretty woman,
especially in her
young days; late
years, too, she kep'
her looks and come
to be so pleasant
lookin'. There, 'tain't
so much matter, I

shall be done afore
a great while. No; I
sha'n't trouble the
fish a great sight
more."

The old widower sat
with his head bowed
over his knitting, as
if he were hastily
shortening the very
thread of time. The
minutes went slowly
by. He stopped his
work and clasped
his hands firmly

together. I saw he had forgotten his guest, and I kept the afternoon watch with him. At last he looked up as if but a moment had passed of his continual loneliness.

“Yes, ma’am, I’m one that has seen trouble,” he said, and began to knit again.

The visible tribute of his careful

housekeeping, and the clean bright room which had once enshrined his wife, and now enshrined her memory, was very moving to me; he had no thought for any one else or for any other place. I began to see her myself in her home,—a delicate-looking, faded little woman, who leaned upon his

rough strength and affectionate heart, who was always watching for his boat out of this very window, and who always opened the door and welcomed him when he came home.

“I used to laugh at her, poor dear,” said Elijah, as if he read my thought. “I used to make light of her

timid notions. She used to be fearful when I was out in bad weather or baffled about gittin' ashore. She used to say the time seemed long to her, but I've found out all about it now. I used to be dreadful thoughtless when I was a young man and the fish was bitin' well. I'd stay out late some o' them days, an' I expect she'd

watch an' watch an'
lose heart a-waitin'.
My heart alive! what
a supper she'd git,
an' be right there
watchin' from the
door, with somethin'
over her head if
'twas cold, waitin' to
hear all about it as
I come up the field.
Lord, how I think
o' all them little
things!"

“This was what she called the best room; in this way,” he said presently, laying his knitting on the table, and leading the way across the front entry and unlocking a door, which he threw open with an air of pride. The best room seemed to me a much sadder and more empty place than the kitchen; its conventionalities

lacked the simple perfection of the humbler room and failed on the side of poor ambition; it was only when one remembered what patient saving, and what high respect for society in the abstract go to such furnishing that the little parlor was interesting at all. I could imagine the great day of certain

purchases, the
bewildering shops of
the next large town,
the aspiring anxious
woman, the clumsy
sea-tanned man in
his best clothes, so
eager to be pleased,
but at ease only
when they were safe
back in the sailboat
again, going down
the bay with their
precious freight, the
hoarded money all
spent and nothing

to think of but tiller
and sail. I looked at
the unworn carpet,
the glass vases on
the mantelpiece with
their prim bunches
of bleached swamp
grass and dusty
marsh rosemary,
and I could read
the history of
Mrs. Tilley's best
room from its very
beginning.

“You see for yourself what beautiful rugs she could make; now I’m going to show you her best tea things she thought so much of,” said the master of the house, opening the door of a shallow cupboard. “That’s real chiny, all of it on those two shelves,” he told me proudly. “I bought it all myself, when we was first married, in the port

of Bordeaux. There never was one single piece of it broke until— Well, I used to say, long as she lived, there never was a piece broke, but long at the last I noticed she'd look kind o' distressed, an' I thought 'twas 'count o' me boastin'. When they asked if they should use it when the folks was here to supper, time

o' her funeral, I knew
she'd want to have
everything nice, and
I said 'certain.' Some
o' the women they
come runnin' to me
an' called me, while
they was takin' of
the chiny down, an'
showed me there
was one o' the cups
broke an' the pieces
wropped in paper
and pushed way back
here, corner o' the
shelf. They didn't

want me to go an'
think they done it.
Poor dear! I had to
put right out o' the
house when I see
that. I knowed in one
minute how 'twas.
We'd got so used to
sayin' 'twas all there
just's I fetched it
home, an' so when
she broke that cup
somehow or 'nother
she couldn't frame
no words to come an'
tell me. She couldn't

think 'twould vex
me, 'twas her own
hurt pride. I guess
there wa'n't no
other secret ever lay
between us."

The French cups with
their gay sprigs of
pink and blue, the
best tumblers, an
old flowered bowl
and tea caddy, and
a japanned waiter
or two adorned the
shelves. These, with

a few daguerreotypes
in a little square
pile, had the closet
to themselves, and
I was conscious of
much pleasure in
seeing them. One
is shown over many
a house in these
days where the
interest may be more
complex, but not
more definite.

“Those were her
best things, poor

dear," said Elijah as he locked the door again. "She told me that last summer before she was taken away that she couldn't think o' anything more she wanted, there was everything in the house, an' all her rooms was furnished pretty. I was goin' over to the Port, an' inquired for errands. I used to

ask her to say what she wanted, cost or no cost—she was a very reasonable woman, an' 'twas the place where she done all but her extra shopping. It kind o' chilled me up when she spoke so satisfied."

**“You don’t go
out fishing after
Christmas?” I asked,
as we came back to
the bright kitchen.**

**“No; I take stiddy
to my knitting after
January sets in,”
said the old seafarer.
“‘Tain’t worth while,
fish make off into
deeper water an’
you can’t stand no
such perishin’ for
the sake o’ what you**

get. I leave out a few traps in sheltered coves an' do a little lobsterin' on fair days. The young fellows braves it out, some on 'em; but, for me, I lay in my winter's yarn an' set here where 'tis warm, an' knit an' take my comfort. Mother learnt me once when I was a lad; she was a beautiful knitter herself. I was laid

up with a bad knee,
an' she said 'twould
take up my time an'
help her; we was a
large family. They'll
buy all the folks
can do down here
to Addicks' store.
They say our Dunnet
stockin's is gettin'
to be celebrated up
to Boston,—good
quality o' wool an'
even knittin' or
somethin'. I've always
been called a pretty

hand to do nettin',
but seines is master
cheap to what they
used to be when
they was all hand
worked. I change
off to nettin' long
towards spring, and
I piece up my trawls
and lines and get my
fishin' stuff to rights.
Lobster pots they
require attention,
but I make 'em up in

spring weather when it's warm there in the barn. No; I ain't one o' them that likes to set an' do nothin'."

"You see the rugs, poor dear did them; she wa'n't very partial to knittin'," old Elijah went on, after he had counted his stitches. "Our rugs is beginnin' to show wear, but I can't master none o' them

womanish tricks. My sister, she tinkers 'em up. She said last time she was here that she guessed they'd last my time."

"The old ones are always the prettiest," I said.

"You ain't referrin' to the braided ones now?" answered Mr. Tilley. "You see ours is braided for the most part, an'

their good looks is
all in the beginnin'.
Poor dear used to
say they made an
easier floor. I go
shufflin' round the
house same's if 'twas
a bo't, and I always
used to be stubbin'
up the corners o' the
hooked kind. Her an'
me was always havin'
our jokes together
same's a boy an' girl.
Outsiders never'd
know nothin' about

it to see us. She had nice manners with all, but to me there was nobody so entertainin'. She'd take off anybody's natural talk winter evenin's when we set here alone, so you'd think 'twas them a-speakin'. There, there!"

I saw that he had dropped a stitch again, and was

snarling the blue yarn
round his clumsy
fingers. He handled
it and threw it off at
arm's length as if it
were a cod line; and
frowned impatiently,
but I saw a tear
shining on his cheek.

I said that I must be
going, it was growing

late, and asked if I might come again, and if he would take me out to the fishing grounds someday.

“Yes, come any time you want to,” said my host, “‘tain’t so pleasant as when poor dear was here. Oh, I didn’t want to lose her an’ she

didn't want to go,
but it had to be. Such
things ain't for us to
say; there's no yes
an' no to it."

"You find Almiry
Todd one o' the best
o' women?" said Mr.
Tilley as we parted.
He was standing in
the doorway and I
had started off down
the narrow green
field. "No, there ain't
a better hearted

woman in the State
o' Maine. I've known
her from a girl. She's
had the best o'
mothers. You tell her
I'm liable to fetch her
up a couple or three
nice good mackerel
early tomorrow,"
he said. "Now don't
let it slip your mind.
Poor dear, she always
thought a sight o'
Almiry, and she used
to remind me there
was nobody to fish

for her; but I don't
rec'lect it as I ought
to. I see you drop a
line yourself very
handy now an' then."

We laughed together
like the best of
friends, and I spoke
again about the
fishing grounds, and
confessed that I
had no fancy for a
southerly breeze and
a ground swell.

**“Nor me neither,”
said the old
fisherman. “Nobody
likes ‘em, say what
they may. Poor dear
was disobliged by
the mere sight of a
bo’t. Almiry’s got
the best o’ mothers,
I expect you know;
Mis’ Blackett out
to Green Island;
and we was always
plannin’ to go out
when summer come;
but there, I couldn’t**

pick no day's weather
that seemed to suit
her just right. I never
set out to worry
her neither, 'twa'n't
no kind o' use; she
was so pleasant we
couldn't have no fret
nor trouble. 'Twas
never 'you dear an'
you darlin'" afore
folks, an' 'you divil'
behind the door!"

As I looked back
from the lower end

of the field I saw him still standing, a lonely figure in the doorway. "Poor dear," I repeated to myself half aloud; "I wonder where she is and what she knows of the little world she left. I wonder what she has been doing these eight years!"

I gave the message about the mackerel to Mrs. Todd.

"Been visitin' with 'Lijah?" she asked with interest. "I expect you had kind of a dull session; he ain't the talkin' kind; dwellin' so much long o' fish seems to make 'em lose the gift o' speech." But when I told her that Mr. Tilley had been talking to me that day, she interrupted me quickly.

**“Then ‘twas all
about his wife, an’
he can’t say nothin’
too pleasant neither.
She was modest
with strangers, but
there ain’t one o’
her old friends can
ever make up her
loss. For me, I don’t
want to go there no
more. There’s some
folks you miss and
some folks you don’t,
when they’re gone,
but there ain’t hardly**

a day I don't think
o' dear Sarah Tilley.
She was always
right there; yes, you
knew just where to
find her like a plain
flower. 'Lijah's worthy
enough; I do esteem
'Lijah, but he's a
ploddin' man."

XXI. THE BACKWARD VIEW

At last it was the time of late summer, when the house was cool and damp in the morning, and all the light seemed to come through green leaves; but at the first step out of doors the sunshine always laid a warm hand on my shoulder,

and the clear, high sky seemed to lift quickly as I looked at it. There was no autumnal mist on the coast, nor any August fog; instead of these, the sea, the sky, all the long shore line and the inland hills, with every bush of bay and every fir-top, gained a deeper color and a sharper clearness. There was something shining in

the air, and a kind of lustre on the water and the pasture grass,—a northern look that, except at this moment of the year, one must go far to seek.

The sunshine of a northern summer was coming to its lovely end.

The days were few then at Dunnet Landing, and I let

each of them slip
away unwillingly as
a miser spends his
coins. I wished to
have one of my first
weeks back again,
with those long
hours when nothing
happened except the
growth of herbs and
the course of the
sun. Once I had not
even known where
to go for a walk; now
there were many
delightful things to

be done and done again, as if I were in London. I felt hurried and full of pleasant engagements, and the days flew by like a handful of flowers flung to the sea wind.

At last I had to say good-bye to all my Dunnet Landing friends, and my homelike place in the little house, and return to the world in

which I feared to find myself a foreigner.

There may be restrictions to such a summer's happiness, but the ease that belongs to simplicity is charming enough to make up for whatever a simple life may lack, and the gifts of peace are not for those who live in the thick of battle.

I was to take the small unpunctual steamer that went down the bay in the afternoon, and I sat for a while by my window looking out on the green herb garden, with regret for company. Mrs. Todd had hardly spoken all day except in the briefest and most disapproving way; it was as if we were on

the edge of a quarrel. It seemed impossible to take my departure with anything like composure. At last I heard a footstep, and looked up to find that Mrs. Todd was standing at the door.

"I've seen to everything now," she told me in an unusually loud and business-like voice. "Your trunks are on

the w'arf by this
time. Cap'n Bowden
he come and took
'em down himself, an'
is going to see that
they're safe aboard.
Yes, I've seen to all
your 'rangements,"
she repeated in a
gentler tone. "These
things I've left on
the kitchen table
you'll want to carry
by hand; the basket
needn't be returned.

I guess I shall walk over towards the Port now an' inquire how old Mis' Edward Caplin is."

I glanced at my friend's face, and saw a look that touched me to the heart. I had been sorry enough before to go away.

"I guess you'll excuse me if I ain't down there to stand around on the w'arf

and see you go," she said, still trying to be gruff. "Yes, I ought to go over and inquire for Mis' Edward Caplin; it's her third shock, and if mother gets in on Sunday she'll want to know just how the old lady is." With this last word Mrs. Todd turned and left me as if with sudden thought of something she had forgotten, so

that I felt sure she was coming back, but presently I heard her go out of the kitchen door and walk down the path toward the gate. I could not part so; I ran after her to say good-bye, but she shook her head and waved her hand without looking back when she heard my hurrying steps, and so went away down the street.

When I went in again
the little house had
suddenly grown
lonely, and my room
looked empty as it
had the day I came. I
and all my belongings
had died out of it,
and I knew how it
would seem when
Mrs. Todd came
back and found her
lodger gone. So we

die before our own eyes; so we see some chapters of our lives come to their natural end.

I found the little packages on the kitchen table. There was a quaint West Indian basket which I knew its owner had valued, and which I had once admired; there was an affecting

provision laid beside it for my seafaring supper, with a neatly tied bunch of southernwood and a twig of bay, and a little old leather box which held the coral pin that Nathan Todd brought home to give to poor Joanna.

There was still an hour to wait, and I went up the hill just above the

schoolhouse and sat there thinking of things, and looking off to sea, and watching for the boat to come in sight. I could see Green Island, small and darkly wooded at that distance; below me were the houses of the village with their apple-trees and bits of garden ground. Presently, as I looked at the

pastures beyond, I caught a last glimpse of Mrs. Todd herself, walking slowly in the footpath that led along, following the shore toward the Port. At such a distance one can feel the large, positive qualities that control a character. Close at hand, Mrs. Todd seemed able and warm-hearted and quite absorbed in her

bustling industries,
but her distant figure
looked mateless
and appealing, with
something about it
that was strangely
self-possessed and
mysterious. Now and
then she stooped to
pick something,—
it might have
been her favorite
pennyroyal,—and at
last I lost sight of her
as she slowly crossed
an open space on

one of the higher points of land, and disappeared again behind a dark clump of juniper and the pointed firs.

As I came away on the little coastwise steamer, there was an old sea running which made the surf leap high on all the rocky shores. I stood on deck, looking back, and watched

the busy gulls agree
and turn, and sway
together down the
long slopes of air,
then separate hastily
and plunge into the
waves. The tide
was setting in, and
plenty of small fish
were coming with it,
unconscious of the
silver flashing of the
great birds overhead
and the quickness of
their fierce beaks.
The sea was full of

life and spirit, the tops of the waves flew back as if they were winged like the gulls themselves, and like them had the freedom of the wind. Out in the main channel we passed a bent-shouldered old fisherman bound for the evening round among his lobster traps. He was toiling along with short oars, and the dory

tossed and sank and
tossed again with the
steamer's waves. I
saw that it was old
Elijah Tilley, and
though we had so
long been strangers
we had come to be
warm friends, and I
wished that he had
waited for one of
his mates, it was
such hard work to
row along shore
through rough seas
and tend the traps

alone. As we passed
I waved my hand
and tried to call to
him, and he looked
up and answered
my farewells by a
solemn nod. The little
town, with the tall
masts of its disabled
schooners in the
inner bay, stood high
above the flat sea for
a few minutes then
it sank back into the
uniformity of the
coast, and became

indistinguishable from the other towns that looked as if they were crumbled on the furzy-green stoniness of the shore.

The small outer islands of the bay were covered among the ledges with turf that looked as fresh as the early grass; there had been some days of rain the week before, and

the darker green
of the sweet-fern
was scattered on
all the pasture
heights. It looked
like the beginning
of summer ashore,
though the sheep,
round and warm in
their winter wool,
betrayed the season
of the year as they
went feeding along
the slopes in the low
afternoon sunshine.
Presently the wind

began to blow and we struck out seaward to double the long sheltering headland of the cape, and when I looked back again, the islands and the headland had run together and Dunnet Landing and all its coasts were lost to sight.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Orne Jewett was born in South Berwick, Maine in 1849. In her childhood she walked all over Maine, as treatment for her rheumatoid arthritis and with her father, a traveling doctor. She achieved literary recognition at 19, eventually becoming one of the most

famous writers of her time. She spent much of her life in Boston and traveling in Europe with her friend, Annie Adams Fields. A carriage accident in 1902 ended her writing career and seven years later she would die of a stroke in her family home overlooking Central Square in South Berwick, Maine.

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This book is set in a font designed by Abelardo Gonzalez called OpenDyslexic

ISBN 9798675361304

Made in the USA
Monee, IL
29 April 2021



67212669R10243

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“I found myself presently among some unfamiliar islands, and suddenly remembered the story of poor Joanna. There is something in the fact of a hermitage that cannot fail to touch the imagination; the recluses are a sad kindred, but they are never commonplace.”

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